

# GITA for YOUTH – THE UNIVERSAL TEACHINGS



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## INTRODUCTION

The spirit of *Gita* is Universal. It spans across time and space. It encompasses psychology or behavioral science dealing with human nature, philosophy, poetry, and the ways and means of enriching life and evolves human beings. It is said by some that *Gita* advocates war, while others claim that *Gita* is outside *Mahabharata* and is not connected to the events. Background of *Gita* is a war which is about to be fought and *Gita* is an intrinsic part of *Mahabharata* as the chain of events that precede the teachings culminate in the Great War central to *Mahabharata*. Also the poetry of *Gita* and poetry of *Mahabharata* resonates, i.e. they use the same meters and same styles. Therefore the author must be the same in both cases, viz. *Krishna Dwaipayana Vyasa*. The teachings of *Gita* are also spread across widely all over *Mahabharata* in some form or the other and therefore are not dissociated with the central theme. *Gita* does not advocate war. It is set in the background of war and prescribes ideal course of actions under different circumstances which would be applicable to persons of different temperaments. However what it postulates is a concept which is not easily understood by scholars, that one should lay all the actions and the fruits thereof to God and face life and its battles. It provides a way to evolve from performing selfish or self seeking actions and begetting the consequent sorrows to performing selfless actions dedicated to God and thereby begetting eternal joy and bliss. One should always act according to one's *dharma*, which signifies moral duty, path of virtue, courage or non-cowardice, and selflessness. Acting in this manner one should not be bothered about the consequences but should work for the sake of the work, treating work or action as worship.

*Gita* starts with the *Yoga* of Despondency. This is significant in spiritual lives because normally people begin searching for Truth when confronted with a great sorrow or misery in life. Then they question - what is the meaning of all? If the search is true, if the query is genuine and if the aspirant is eager, the truth reveals itself, step by step, as the knowledge in *Gita* unfolds. First dispassion and detachment about worldly matters come by providing the knowledge of the immortal and non-decaying Self, which unlike any impermanent worldly and material thing. Then the light

of knowledge dawns through detached action. Then the first light of renunciation appears. One gets to know the first glimpse of God - the divine incarnation and the knowledge of the Supreme Being. One then comes to know of the eternal path to that Supreme Being, and the nature of the Supreme Being further unfolds. One then gets to understand the divine glories, the manifestations of the divine and then the divine form reveals itself. One then attains the height of devotion and spiritual knowledge. One comes to know the nature of *Maya* or *Prakrti* and learns to get out of her chain of the three gunas. One is then established in *Purusha* or the Self, the *Atman*, who is ever free from any bondage. The truest nature of the divine being is further revealed and one identifies the world to be composed of two basic traits of divinity and demoniac ones which are driving all actions in the universe. One also gets to know the threefold *Sraddha* which, along with the traits, are prime movers of the nature of mankind. All knowledge and wisdom culminate in supreme renunciation, of complete surrender to the divine will.

*Gita* discusses two kinds of persons. One of them is destined to act in the best interest of mankind and therefore should rise above all selfishness and associated tribulations, who should sacrifice the fruits of those actions to the Supreme Being and dedicate himself to His will. The other is above all actions, ever free from bondages and ever blissful. The latter does not need to perform any action and if he/she acts, it would be only for the general welfare and those actions will be completely devoid of any sense of "Me" or "Mine".

*Gita* is also meant to provide courage to face life and its vicissitudes with dignity and confidence. It urges us to be a man and stare in the face of life's undulations and uncertainties without trepidation. It reminds us to act like a noble born and not tremble with the terrible prospect of having to witness the massacre unleashed by the *samsara* on the souls.

The last word of *Gita* is renunciation as succinctly put by one of the greatest *avatars* and mystics *Sri Ramakrishna*. *Gita's* essence is what comes of reversing the word *Gita*, viz. *Tagi* or *Tyagi*, the all renounced. "*Surrender thy fruits of action, surrender everything and come unto Me, surrender all your thoughts and actions to Me and you'll incur no sin*", these are the very

messages told by the Lord to His worthy disciple. These messages are universal in spirit and a source of supreme joy for all His devotees.

## BACK GROUND

A huge battle was about to be fought and the old blind king *Dhritarastra* was anxious to get the news of the battle as his sons and other near relations called *Kurus* were fighting his own nephews, the great *Pandavas* or the sons of *Pandu*. The battle was fought because the elder son of the old king, *Duryadhona*, a proud and wicked prince, wanted the entire kingdom for himself, without sharing it with his cousins, the five *Pandavas* who were just and virtuous. *Duryadhona* had earlier hatched a conspiracy together with his brother *Duhsashana*, friend and chief lieutenant *Karna* and his maternal uncle *Shakuni* to get the kingdom from the *Pandavas*, by inviting the eldest *Pandava* *Yudhisthira* to a game of dice and defeating him by unfair means. The defeat meant that the *Pandavas* had to go and live in the forest for twelve years and remain in hiding for one more year. At the end of that thirteen year period the *Pandavas* came back and duly asked for their share of the kingdom. However *Duryadhona* was in no mood to give the kingdom back. When *Krishna*, who was the friend of the *Pandavas*, asked for five villages on their behalf in order to avoid any battle among the brothers, *Duryadhona* replied haughtily that without battle he would not give even the amount of earth that sticks to the edge of a needle. Therefore both sides prepared for the imminent great battle.

*Duryadhona*, being the king, had many soldiers and many other kings were fighting for him. *Pandavas*, however, being virtuous, had several friends and relatives who were ready to die for them and thus the battle was expected to be fierce.

The battleground was decided to be *Kurukshetra*, a huge and sprawling area which was also known as a *dharmakshetra* or a place of supreme virtue. This was because in the past many sacrificial rites were performed here and it was told by the sages that whoever would die in battle in this ground, would go to the heaven. The ground was named after the ancient king *Kuru* who was also the founder of the *Kuru* dynasty, to which belonged the warring factions, *Kauravas* and *Pandavas*.

The blind king wanted to get first hand news of the war and therefore the great sage *Krishna Dwaipayana Vyasa*, employed *Sanjaya*, a trusted aide to narrate the happenings of the war. In order that *Sanjaya* can view the war without going to the battlefield, *Vyasa* vested him with special power by which he would be able to view all the events in the war as they were happening. It was now to *Sanjaya* that the king *Dhritarastra* turned. *Sanjaya* started his narration from Day 10 of the eighteen days war, the day on which the grandfather *Bhisma*, grand old man of the *Kuru* clan, who was the chief lieutenant of *Duryadhona*, fell, being hit by a volley of arrows from *Arjuna*, the *Pandava* hero.



## Chapter 1: Despondency of Arjuna

“Oh Sanjaya, tell me all about my sons and *Pandavas* who have assembled there on the holy ground of *Kurukshetra*. What were they doing? “, asked *Dhritarastra*.

*Sanjaya* narrated the events as they happened 10 days back, just before the start of the war. The prince *Duryadhona* went to *Drona*, his preceptor, who was also a major lieutenant of his army and described the great warriors on both sides. On the *Pandava* side the army chief was *Dhrstadyumna*, the son of *Panchala* king *Drupada*.

There were warriors like *Bhima* and *Arjuna*, the two mighty *Pandava* brothers; *Virata*, the king of *Matsya*; *Yuyudhana* or *Satyaki*, the disciple of *Arjuna*; *Drupada* himself; *Dhrstaketu*, the king of *Chedi*; *Chekitana* or the son of *Satyaki*; the king of *Kashi*; *Purujit*, also called *Kuntibhoja*, the maternal uncle of the *Pandavas*; *Shaivya*; *Yudhamanyu* and *Uattamauja*, the *Panchala* princes; *Abhimanyu*, the son of *Subhadra* and *Arjuna*; and the sons of *Draupadi* and the five *Pandavas*.

All of these warriors were great and powerful and renowned for their fighting prowess.

On the side of *Kauravas*, the chief was *Bhisma*, the great grandfather of the *Pandavas* and *Kauravas*, who despite his age and love for *Pandavas*, was fighting for *Duryadhona* on account of his obligation towards the *Kuru* dynasty of whose representative was *Dhritarastra*. The second in command was *Drona*, the preceptor. Other major warriors were *Karna*, *Krpa*, *Vikarna*, the brother of *Duryadhona*, *Aswatthama*, the son of *Drona*, *Bhurisrava*, the son of *Somadatta*, and *Jayadhrata*, the brother in law of *Duryadhona*. There were many other kings and fighters on both sides.

*Duryadhona* remarked that all his warriors needed to guard *Bhisma*, as on the mighty general rested all the hopes of the *Kauarava* army. In order to reassure *Duryadhona*, *Bhisma* then blew his conch, and drums, trumpets, cymbals, gongs and horns, all were used together to make a terrific noise.

However the din did not deter the *Pandavas*. *Arjuna*, whose charioteer was none other than *Krishna*, blew his great conch named *Devadatta*, while *Krishna* blew the conch named *Panchajanya*. *Paundra* was the name of the conch blown by powerful *Bhima*, the second *Pandava*.

*Anantavijaya* was *Yudhisthira*'s conch while *Nakula* and *Sahadeva* the young *Pandava* twins blew on their resp. conches named as *Sughosha* and *Manipushpaka*.

The king of *Kashi*; *Shikhandi*, the son of *Drupada*; *Dhrstadyumna*, *Satyaki*, *Virata*, *Drupada* himself, the sons of *Draupadi*, and *Abhimanyu*, all of them blew their resp. conches. The loud noise that thus got created generated great fear among their enemies and resonated all over the heaven and earth.

Having seen the army of his foes, *Arjuna*, asked *Krishna* to take his chariot in between the two armies ready to fight, so that he could see clearly with whom he would be fighting. *Krishna*, the expert charioteer brought the chariot in the middle and told him, "See *Partha*, the assembled warriors." When he faced the *Kuru* army, *Arjuna* realized with horror that he was going to fight his cousins, his *Guru*, his grandfather, and all other relatives. He was paralyzed with pity and fear as he would have to kill so many relatives to win the war. *Arjuna* therefore pleaded with *Krishna* that he could not fight under the given circumstance. He was trembling because of nervousness, and he could not stand on his feet. His weapons fell from his hand and he sank down on his knees on the chariot. He thus said to *Krishna*, "what is the profit that I am going to derive by killing all my relations? How shall we enjoy the kingdom after destroying all the near and dear ones? It is a great sin to kill so many people because without the mighty warriors dynasties will perish and there will be chaos everywhere. As a result our forefathers and ancestors will not get their due in the heaven. Nobody will conform to the injunctions of the Holy Scriptures. As a consequence we all would be incurring grave sins. Women will yield to horrendous sins through debauchery and there will be racial intermingling, resulting in formation of mixed classes who would not be following the essence of religion. We, together with our *Pitrs* or ancestors will sink into deepest hell on account of the calamity. Knowing these how can I proceed

with the war? I would rather not fight, let me get killed, at least I shall not be privy to this sin." Saying these unto *Krishna*, *Arjuna* sank down on the chariot, deeply dejected and disturbed.

Thus ends the chapter on Despondency of *Arjuna*.

On a casual glance, *Arjuna's* argument seems to be potent. However, on a closer look we find that he is afflicted with a deep malaise. He is afraid of the consequences and he is hesitant to perform his duties to his brothers and to the army men who have assembled to avenge the injustice. His desisting from war will only help the evil to prosper. When a war is inevitable, when the other side is non-renting, when virtue is at stake, if one relinquishes it for the sake of pity, he commits a grave folly. The consequences of his relinquishing may be even worse than his own fears. It is now *Krishna's* responsibility to guide his favourite friend and disciple. Moreover *Arjuna* is not doing this out of compassion, but out of his attachment to his relatives. If there were other armies of unrelated kings he would not have hesitated to kill them. Therefore he has no high moral ground.

This chapter is truly significant because for most of us despondency, agony and tribulations are keys that lead the mind and intellect to look inwards rather than outwards. Therefore most spiritual quests begin from a state of despondency.

## CHAPTER 2: THE SANKHYA PRINCIPLE

There, seeing the dejected one on his knees, Lord Krishna spoke firmly to Arjuna. "What has come upon you, why are you dejected and despondent when there is a grave danger awaiting us in the form of a battle? This is not the characteristics of a noble born. Arise! Don't desist from action out of fear or pity; this is not fit for you, the mighty charioteer. Shed that weakness that has come upon you, stand up and fight!"

According to Swami Vivekananda, this is the most profound message of Gita. Gita is manliness and courage personified. From every page of Gita one message is loud and clear - Fearlessness. Perhaps because it started by depicting the most basic of all animal instincts, the fear, which drove Arjuna to a state of despondency, that the contrast (to fear) in the message delivered by the Supreme Lord, becomes emphatic in every chapter of Gita. "Act without desire for fruits, you will be fearless. Treat every action as sacrifice, you will be fearless. Know thy Self, that is unborn, undying, omnipresent and omniscient and become fearless. Go beyond virtue and vices and become fearless. Get established in that state of supreme bliss where the Self is seen in every being and every being in the Self and be fearless. Know the Supreme Being to be everything and in everything and become fearless. Become a devotee of highest form and be fearless. Do all your work and dedicate the fruits to the Supreme Being and be fearless. Know the distinction between Self and Nature and know all actions as originating from the Nature and be fearless. Act according to the Nature and be fearless. Know the three qualities of Nature and their work and be fearless. Know the threefold Sradhas and be fearless. Know the divine and demoniac traits and be fearless by cultivating the divine traits. Know the divine glories and manifestations and be fearless. Work in a spirit of renunciation and be fearless. Know the supreme divine being and be fearless. See the supreme form and be absolutely fearless." These are the essential takeaways from Gita.

*Arjuna* said, still in that piteous tone, "How can I hurl weapons at my Guru *Drona* and my great grandfather *Bhisma*? Killing these elders for the sake of kingdom is sin. How can I commit such a terrible sin of slaughtering my *Guru*? I am no longer able to understand what is better for me, to defeat the

enemies or to get defeated rather than killing these elders and relatives. What shall we do with kingdom if all our near and dear ones are killed? Oh *Krishna*, please consider me as your disciple and please advise me”.

He further said that he would not fight till his doubts were resolved.

The mind is a complex phenomenon. When intelligence is clouded, there are many doubts in mind; it cannot arrive at a decision. It acts on impulse and instincts, which often lead to perilous situations. Such is the condition of Arjuna. He is devoid of rational thinking at the present moment. He doesn't consider the fact that the same Guru Drona and Bhishma have assembled in the war to kill him and his brothers without compunction. They also know the moral duties, perhaps better than him, and yet they are ready to fight as they are in perfect control of their senses.

The Lord is the universal *Guru*. He only teaches the sincere souls who pray to Him earnestly for knowledge. Here *Arjuna*, though grief stricken, is earnestly seeking advice and therefore Lord *Krishna*, with utmost control of His senses, in a mocking tone told His friend and His favourite disciple, “Verily you’ve spoken as if you are wise, however you grieve for what is unworthy of grief. Wise men never mourn for the living or the dead.”

#### THE ATMAN AND THE MYSTERY OF DEATH

Grief and delusion are the two main causes of sorrows. Grief is the effect of a loss of a belonging and therefore its source lies in the ego - "I" and "Mine". One does not grieve for the loss of belongings of others. Delusion is hope, despair, agony, ecstasy etc. associated with the day to day life. Delusion has its source in desire. Both delusion and grief are also rooted in ignorance as desire and ego are results of ignorance (of the reality - the Self or the Supreme Being). Arjuna is deluded and is grieving for all his relatives who will die. So it is necessary to address his grief first. That is the significance of the previous statement made by *Sri Krishna*.

Lord *Krishna* then began to explain to *Arjuna* a very important philosophy – the philosophy of immortality, or life after death, of the *Atman* or the soul. He said to *Arjuna*, “we, I, you and these kings who have assembled for fighting here were all there before and we will all be hereafter. There

was never a time when we were not there and there will never be a time when we shall not exist“

He explained to *Arjuna* that as youth, maturity and old age are mere transformations of the body, so is death and knowing it wise men never grieve. The senses of pleasure and pain, heat and cold are only temporary and knowing them as temporary wise men possess great strength and fortitude to bear them. Those who are not disturbed by these ephemeral feelings of grief and pain, verily, are like Self or *Atman* itself which is not disturbed by these bodily sensations. *Atman* or Self being immortal cannot cease to exist, while the body, being a material object, will not exist permanently. The difference between body and *Atman* is realized by seers who can perceive the truth (of the distinction). The *Atman* is present everywhere (omnipresent) and it is immortal, no one can destroy it.

*Krishna* further told *Arjuna*, “This body is perishable, while the *Atman* that dwells inside is eternal, indestructible and immeasurable. Therefore Oh Prince, fight without any doubt as you cannot destroy the *Atman*, which is verily all these fighters are. Those who consider themselves as slayer and those who think that they are slain, none of them know that they are actually *Atman* which can neither slay nor be slain.”

He further explained that this *Atman* is eternal and immortal, it has neither beginning nor end, it is birth less and deathless, and therefore can never be killed even though the body which carries it perishes.

Only one who knows this *Atman* truly, as eternal and indestructible is capable of arriving at this knowledge, that in reality no one kills and none gets killed. As a man changes his old and worn out garment, so this *Atman* changes a body and adopts a new one when the need for that body is over, when that body is worn out and decayed. This *Atman*, the indweller, cannot be pierced by weapons, burnt by fire, worn by water or withered by wind like other physical and geographical objects. This *Atman* is therefore indestructible, imperishable, eternal, unchangeable, and all pervasive (infinite). Therefore by knowing this *Atman* one should not grieve for the departed.

Even if one (wrongfully) considers that the body, which is born again and again and dies again and again is the *Atman*, one should not grieve as it is the universal law that if one is born, one must die.

Before birth we do not perceive this *Atman* and after death we do not perceive it. Only in between birth and death it is perceived through the body and therefore knowing it as only temporary, one should not be sorrowful for it.

This *Atman* is difficult to perceive and understand, even though it is wonderful to behold it, to speak about it and to hear about it. But know this for certain that this indweller *Atman* is indestructible in all beings and therefore one should not grieve.

Thus in this beautiful teaching, the Lord explains how the term “death” means nothing extraordinary to the wise. Everybody is an *Atman*, the eternal, birth less and deathless entity and therefore nobody gets truly killed or can be killed and therefore there is nothing to grieve for. However this knowledge is only for a realized soul, who can never kill. An ordinary mortal cannot comprehend *Atman* and hence should not justify his murderous intentions with the grandest realization as stated in *Gita*. Even if a realized soul kills, he does it for the benefit of the whole world and humanity and never for any selfish purpose.

The question that comes is how can there be so many *Atman*, which are all infinite? Infinity is unique. *Advaita Vedanta* comes to the rescue. Actually there is one infinite *Atman* which is apparent or manifest as many in many bodies and minds. Just as the sun reflects in many mirrors as multiple suns, but actually they are all images, so also the One Cosmic Soul reflects in many bodies and minds as many souls.

Therefore to realize *Atman* is to realize the grand Unity pervading everything.

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## **VIRTUE AND VICE – THE ETHICS BEHIND DUTY**

*Krishna* then explained to *Arjuna* what would happen if he did not fight. He said that a just and righteous war is always welcome to a *Kshatriya* (the warrior) and to fight that war is one’s duty. One should not hesitate to

perform that duty. Instead one should be happy to fight in such a war as it would lead to glory and prosperity.

However, if out of fear or of compulsion one does not fight such a war, forsaking reputation and responsibility, that person incurs terrible sin of dereliction of duty. This mean act of his is told and retold by all for eternity and this loss of reputation is worse than death for a noble born. Other heroes would belittle him thinking that he fled from war out of fear, and would perpetually look down upon him. His enemies would mock him, talk about him disparagingly, and that should be extremely painful for any esteemed soul to bear.

*Krishna* then encouraged *Arjuna* saying, "Arise *Kaunteya*! Fight this war with determination. If you get killed you are sure to ascend to heaven and if you win you are going to rule this earth, what is there to fear? I'll tell you a way by which you'll never incur a sin. Treat pleasure and pain, happiness and misery, success and failure equally. Under all these circumstances remain composed and fight, you'll incur no sin. This is the teaching from the principle of *Sankhya*."

Before the commencement of war *Arjuna* did not express his reservation in the council held in king *Virat*'s court (*Mahabharata - Udyag Parva*). He was enthusiastic. *Krishna* tried his best to prevent a war but was not successful owing to the obstinacy of *Duryadhona*. Now that war is imminent *Arjuna* is dragging his feet, which is totally against the *Kshatriya* principle. *Sri Krishna* is merely reminding him of his duty.

*Sri Krishna* is also here reminding us of our duty to fight in everyday life, by remaining calm and composed, and by not retreating out of fear or pity. Virtue lies in fighting righteously and courageously. Pulling out of the battle out of fear or pity is sin. Equanimity (ability to remain equally composed) under all circumstances, be it prosperity or adversity, and not forsaking determination and courage in the face of adversity are great virtues. Those who commit suicide thinking that the life's tribulations are unbearable are actually like *Arjuna*, fleeing from the battle.



## INTELLECT AND SELFLESS ACTION

*Krishna* further said, "Hear me now explaining the principles of another discipline, the *Yoga* of intellect. This teaching will enable you to gain freedom from the evil effects of any action. Such intellect even in small measure will protect you from great fear and tribulations."

*Krishna* then explained the concept of single minded intellect. The single minded intellect is for one who is determined and steady in his goal. For others who are engaged in too many selfish thoughts or selfish actions, such intellect does not appeal. Selfish actions are followed by people who rejoice in the doctrines of *Veda* which prescribe ways for attaining heaven and material prosperity. In pursuit of material happiness such people often abandon the path of steadiness of mind and intellect and thus suffer.

*Veda*, or the entire mass of revealed knowledge, has two parts - one is called *Karma Kanda*, the other is called the *Jnana Kanda*. *Karma Kanda* deals with the rites and rituals for attaining material prosperity and heavenly abode, while *Jnana Kanda* talks about Supreme Knowledge which leads to liberation. The Lord describes here the people who are obsessed with the rites and rituals for gaining selfish ends.

During the period in which Mahabharata events took place, the spiritual wisdom had declined and attaining heavens by performing sacrifices and rituals as prescribed in Vedas was the main objective for the three upper castes. Also Brahmins encouraged sacrifices, rites and rituals as the charities would confer upon them material benefits. So the emphasis was on the first three of the four *Vargas* or paths - *Dharma* or virtue, *Artha* or Material Prosperity and *Kama* or fulfillment of desires. The fourth - *Moksha* or emancipation (from all sorrows, tribulations and earthly life) was considered as too difficult or unattainable. In *Gita*, *Sri Krishna* addresses this misconception. The path of *Moksha* has been the primary emphasis of all *Avataras* or divine incarnations. Lord *Buddha*'s primary message is how to attain Nirvana or liberation from bondage, Jesus has emphasized on attaining kingdom of heaven, a state not very different from that of *Mukti* or *Moksha*, *Sri Ramakrishna*'s whole gospel is centered on realization of God and *Mukti*. Direct realization of divinity and *Mukti* is the central tenet of the *Upanishads*.

Any selfish action brings suffering in its wake. Any pleasure brings pain and unhappiness. Only one who is able to rise above pleasure and pain can possess this single minded intellect. Such a person is pure and selfless and to him doctrines of *Veda* prescribing material prosperity are as useless as tiny water tanks in a place where water is plentiful. This intellect also leads one to selfless action, an action which does not seek the results or fruits of it.

This is one of the central tenets of *Gita*; action for action's sake should be one's goal, not the fruits therein. As we have to perform worldly duties, we must act, but without desiring the results of such actions. Therefore the fear of failure or joy of success should never be the motive of acting, nor should one give up work being fearful of consequences, as *Arjuna* was going to do. One should be steadfast in this intellect and should act without attachment to the fruits of action, being composed under prosperity and adversity.

In *Swami Vivekananda's* words, only a selfless action is an action in which we actually relinquish the fruits. Any selfish action is bound to be driven by desire and therefore is unworthy of being qualified as "action prescribed in *Gita*". If *Arjuna* fights the battle, not for name, fame or fortune, nor for recovering lost kingdom, and nor for avenging the injustice, but simply as a duty which needs to be complied with, he will be acting selflessly. However this course is dangerous as any nefarious act (for instance mass killings perpetrated by fundamentalists and bigots) can be justified as duty. But the difference lies in attitude. In one, *Sraddha* or devotion is the main driver which automatically achieves a virtuous end and where one gracefully accepts any consequence. The other one which results in monstrous calamities is driven by fear and hatred and such fundamentalists will never gracefully accept their defeat and destruction of their cause. In eighteenth chapter of *Gita* we'll learn that while former activities are driven by a knowledge which is pure or *Sattvik*, the latter are driven by one which is *Tamasik* or quality of darkness. There is actually a very thin red line between these two qualities of nature as they are the opposite ends of the same spectrum which often appear equal to an unaccustomed eye (e.g. high wavelengths and low wavelengths are both invisible to the naked eye).

This state of composure, non attachment and lack of desire is called *Yoga*. One who works merely for fruits is a pitiable wretch as he/she is far inferior to the one who is steadfast in intellect, who is able to shun any desire and the associated miseries (of non fulfillment of the desire) and happiness (of fulfillment of the desire). *Yoga* enables one to be far more efficient in action as by renouncing the fruits one is able to work devotedly, free of anxiety.

Sages, propelled by such selfless actions, could liberate themselves from the shackles of life and death and attain bliss. Such people can transcend all confusions associated with *Vedas* (*Sruti* or one that is heard), [discriminate the sugar from sand](#), and can remain steadfast despite injunctions from scriptures like the *Vedas* on ways for attaining material progress and heavenly merits.

Intellect based on selfless action, renunciation of the desire for fruits of the action will enable a person to find everlasting peace. Free from the shackles of the desire for the fruits of good action, viz. material prosperity, good things, and heaven in the afterlife, such people of steady intellect never suffers from any anxiety on account of not getting what they want, as they do not have any want. [Such persons can fight a war and kill people but never beget sin as they fight for the sake of eternal duty without any desire for victory or defeat, name, fame, recognition, fortune or any other selfish motive.](#)

### **DETERMINED OR ONE POINTED INTELLECT**

*Arjuna* said, “Can you please explain to me these concepts of determined or single minded intellect? Who can be said to possess such single minded intellect? How does he speak or sit or move?”

In short, *Arjuna* wanted to know the difference between steadfast intellect and ordinary intellect and the mark of a man who possesses such an intellect.

*Krishna* then began explaining the characteristics of steadfast intellect or *Sthitaprajnya*. Such a person is unique in that he has been able to shed all traces of desire from his mind and is ever content by remaining immersed

in contemplation. He is never dejected in sorrow, nor is he joyful in happiness. He is simply above the mundane pleasures and pain of life, knowing them to be fleeting or transient. He is devoid of passion, detached from anger or hankerings of material things and steady in his wisdom. In short, he is a true sage.

One who is unattached to success and failure and fruits of action, does not covet praises and detest blames, is said to be of steady intellect. Like a tortoise which is able to withdraw its limbs inside its shell, a person of steady intellect is able to withdraw the five senses from their resp. objects and thus remain indifferent to the pleasures derived from the senses, like the pleasure of seeing a beautiful flower or of relishing a good dish, as well as to the consequent pains (of having to relinquish the transitory pleasure). In this manner, by controlling his senses, which otherwise tend to drag his mind and intellect in different directions, such a person can remain unperturbed under all circumstances.

Being slave to one's senses makes one slave to the passions, to the fruits of actions and to the desires and impulses. By controlling senses, one is able to master over every kind of emotion and impulse and is therefore able to withstand the vagaries of life far better than one devoid of such controlling power.

A *Sthitaprajnya* is not Stoic. He is not indifferent to the sorrows and miseries and pains and pleasures. He is above all these dualities. They touch him, but cannot soil him, because he floats above them. He knows that everything is transient, not by mere intellectual reasoning like the stoics, but through actual experience and realization. Therefore unlike stoics he merely does not hide his feelings and wear a mask, but he is joyous and playful knowing the illusion of the world. To him this world is a world of shadows, of a theatre of which he is just another actor and therefore he plays his part calmly, knowing all the while that the play must end and a new one would begin. He can, at his will, withdraw his senses from the sense objects and thus never gets attached to anything or anybody. He is thus liberated from the bondage of the world in his very life. He is ever blissful, that's the only word to describe him.

In the beginning we have discussed that *Gita* explicitly deals with two types of personalities, one above all actions and ever immersed in Bliss and the other has to always engage in actions. *Arjuna* and most of us belong to the second category. Therefore *Sri Krishna* is telling *Arjuna* how a person who is above all actions different from the rest of us. Unless we achieve this state of *Sthitaprajnya*, we'll have to perform our duties.

In the fourteenth chapter, this same state has been redefined as that transcending the three *gunas* or qualities of nature.

However even after controlling the senses, trace of desire for such sense pleasures like good food remains and can go only after beholding the God, the supreme truth. The senses are very powerful. Like powerful horses they can drag down the mind of even the wise. With determined and one pointed devotion towards God, senses and mind, passions, anger, lust and desire can be controlled. That's what a person of steady intellect is capable of doing.

Lord *Krishna* then told *Arjuna* how anger destroys sanity and reason. He said that while constantly thinking about selfish interests, a person gets attached to those thoughts, i.e. he cannot get rid of them. From attachment come selfish motives and desires. If one for instance thinks continuously that one should have a coveted object, by constantly meditating over that thought, he develops a strong desire for possessing the object. He becomes anxious about failure to get the object. From desire springs anger, against all the obstacles in the path of acquiring that object. From anger comes delusion and from delusion, temporary insanity and loss of ability to think logically. At that situation one falls from the path of virtue. Therefore anger and desire unless controlled, leads to vice.

Every vice in this world stems from desire and anger - a selfish desire to enjoy and anger against the obstacles to enjoy. Such uncontrolled passions lead to destruction in the same way as uncontrolled horses lead a chariot to the path of destruction.

One who is ever free from the twin passions of attraction and repulsion, can move among the sense objects including all the good things in the

world, without any attraction or lust for them. This can happen with complete mastery over one's senses, and such a person attains everlasting peace through self control. Such a person of tranquil mind is free from all sorrows and can attain the steadfast intellect.

However persons, who do not have this mastery over senses, who are yet to realize the supreme truth, do not possess this unique faculty of steady intellect, nor do they have knowledge of this intellect. Without the knowledge they are devoid of peace and without peace they cannot attain happiness.

Senses can even drag the mind with them, like a powerful gale which drives a boat on the river. Such uncontrolled senses can wreak havoc on a person. Persons of uncontrolled senses yield very easily to anger, passions, temptations, fear, lust and greed and they are ever sorrowful. Senses are like powerful horses, controlled by mind as the reign and body as the carriage. If these horses are not controlled, they will drive the carriage anywhere, leading to serious damage and destruction.

If for instance, one is so attached to drinking that one cannot leave it, the drinking ultimately becomes the cause of grief and destruction.

However others, who have controlled these senses and are indifferent towards sense objects of pleasure, can be of steadfast intellect.

A person of steadfast intellect will have clear understanding through complete mastery over the senses and therefore what is unknown and obtuse to common men, the lofty spiritual thoughts and realizations, will be clear as daylight to him, while he would be oblivious to what are obvious to common men, viz. selfish desires and material gains. His selfless and esoteric thoughts are alien to the ordinary people, and the worldly affairs are alien to him. He is awake when the entire world is immersed in the deep slumber of ignorance. He is not awake to the selfishness and material pursuits of the world.

The world of sense objects and material desires may hit a person of steady intellect day in and day out, but he would remain calm and unperturbed by them, without falling to temptations, just as an ocean does not swell



even as myriads of rivers pour water into it. Free from desires, such persons are without ego or possessiveness, and thus they attain everlasting peace.

Lord *Krishna* termed this state as "*Brahmisthiti*", or the state of supreme consciousness, where one never suffers from any delusion, and attaining which, even in the end, one attains freedom from all bondages.

*Sthitaprajnya* is a great concept in human psychology. It is the state of an ever perfect being, a person free from desire and from the vagaries of mind and senses. Such persons are ever free as they do not suffer from any anxiety on account of unfulfilled desires, are not affected by material prosperity or adversity and therefore are not concerned about virtue or vices. When they perform an action, they do it for the action's sake, without cherishing any desire for its fruits. In fact in the next chapter we shall see that such actions are mainly for "*Lokasamgraham*" or education of people, to teach others to follow the right path, as *Buddha* or *Christ* or *Ramakrishna-Vivekananda* did. Calm and composed under all circumstances, they are sources of immense strength and peace. Such beings are the ever liberated beings, who cannot be tainted by the world and its affairs. This is the state of steady intellect which, Lord *Krishna* sets as goal to *Arjuna* and to the entire mankind.

However unless that state is obtained actions should not be relinquished. This is the subject of discussion in the next chapter.

Thus ends the chapter on *Sankhya* Yoga or the Yoga of doctrines of *Sankhya*.

## CHAPTER 3: YOGA OF SELFLESS ACTION

*Arjuna*, the dejected, was still in a confused state of mind. He humbly asked *Krishna*, “You spoke about intellect being greater than action, and yet you ask me to get involved in this ghastly action, of fighting a terrible war! I cannot comprehend you. Kindly show me one way which I can follow.”

In the previous chapter the Lord had discussed two possible states - action without desiring the fruits and renunciation of action with steady wisdom. In fact *Sri Krishna* had categorically stated that the second state is achievable through the first one. One, who performs actions without attachment and desire for fruits, ultimately gets over all sorrows and delusions and arrive at a state of *Sthitaprajnya* or steady intellect. But *Arjuna* missed that vital point. He still thought renunciation of action was better than action, esp. if consequences of that action were disastrous.

*Krishna* responded, “I have shown you two schools of wisdom generally followed in this world, the path of knowledge or *Sankhya* and the path of selfless action for *Yogis*. One cannot attain liberation from action as obtained by persons of steady intellect, by simply not choosing to act, nor can one attain perfection merely by renouncing action.

Nor will anybody be able to remain inactive for even a moment, as the qualities born out of his nature will impel him to work.”

The qualities which are born out of nature are of three types – viz. *Sattvik* or tranquil, *Rajasik* or active and *Tamasik* or laziness. These qualities shape the personalities – whether a person would be restless or calm or a slave of passions and laziness would be determined by the preponderance of one quality over the other. Therefore it is nature that drives action. This is a key postulate of *Gita*. Many people, esp. Western scholars misinterpret it as *Sri Krishna* favoring war and violence over non violence. The Lord here makes it very clear that one cannot simply choose to remain inactive and thus think that he has become spiritually enlightened. One need not always attain perfection through renunciation of actions. It is very difficult for one to remain without acting as the very nature of all living beings force them to work, and not remain idle. Therefore a non enlightened soul, one who



has not realized the principles of action, and **very importantly one who has not conquered the nature and its qualities**, should never forsake action.

Lord *Krishna* further explained that if a person merely sits idle thinking that he has controlled his senses and passions, all the while meditating upon objects of senses and worldly affairs, he is deluded. If on the other hand, by controlling the senses with the help of mind, one indulges in selfless action, one becomes worthy of possessing that steady intellect.

Lord *Krishna* thereafter tells *Arjuna*, “Oh *Arjuna*, do your work diligently, as action is greater than inaction. Even for maintaining your body, you’ll have to act (partaking of food, sleeping and other essential activities to maintain the regular functions of the body). However work leads to fetters, which bind a person to the world, unless the same work is performed selflessly as a sacrifice unto others. Therefore work for the sake of work, devoid of any attachment (to the fruits).”

This is further explained in the fifth chapter. A person of steady intellect, a true Sannyasin, one who has truly renounced all actions, established in Self and beyond nature, knows that all actions are born out of nature. Even the bodily functions are merely being performed by senses under the impulse of nature, and he, the *Atman*, is different from body, mind and ego and therefore merely a witness to these actions. Actions automatically fall away from him.

## THE CONCEPT OF SACRIFICE

*Krishna* now explained that in the beginning when the Lord of all beings created mankind through a great sacrifice, He said unto them that may this (sacrifice) bestow upon them the ability to procreate and fulfill their desires. The Lord also advised to His subjects that there should be reciprocity between celestials and mankind. By giving through sacrifice or *Yajna* unto the gods who should share the fruits of labor of mankind, the latter could expect material bliss from the former. Thus both the entities (celestials and human race) would nourish each other and grow through the sacrifice conducted by human beings. Nourished by sacrifices and

austerities, gods will provide the mortals objects of desire and enjoyment. So without giving them their due in the form of sacrifices, one who enjoys the results of material prosperity, he is verily a thief. On the other hand person who consumes the remaining portion of the products of his toil only after bequeathing a share of it to the others, is truly blessed, while the selfish one who consume it all without sacrificing begets sin.

This is the concept of sacrifice linked to selfish action or action born out of desire. Here the sacrifice is intended for material prosperity. However even that is necessary for the cosmic balance and harmony as will be evident in the subsequent teachings. We pray to the gods by offering them various fruits of our toils, while they respond to our prayers by giving us material and spiritual bliss. This cycle of give and take is necessary to establish a harmonious relationship between man and all other entities. Same concept applies to man's relationship with environment, with animals like cows which provide milk in exchange of the food and care it receives. So the cycle of sacrifices or giving a portion of our toils to others for their and our well being is a natural process established since time immemorial. We implant a seed and nourish it with water to get a tree laden with fruit. The fruit is then consumed not only by us, but by others as well as by numerous birds, insects and animals. Thus all our activities should be forms of sacrifices in various degrees in a way whereby others can depend on us for their prosperity and nourishment and we depend on them for our welfare and happiness. This concept of sacrifice is a truly beautiful one. It reminds us that we do not exist merely for ourselves, but for others. It reminds us to become selfless by degrees, by reserving and donating the first and sizeable portion of all our material enjoyments to others. It tells us that life has not been given for our own selfish enjoyments, but for providing for others, the less fortunate ones, who are dependent on us in various ways. Even the gods share this mutual dependence and therefore this is a cosmic law. This theory is the very foundation of a moral, ethical and selfless society which India was at one point of time in history.

The living beings subsist on food which is the result of rain. A good rain ensures a good harvest and animals subsist on that harvest. Green foliage become source of nourishment for various animals and insects. Rain water provides sustenance to aquatic animals as well. Men feed on the grains as

well as on animal meat. Therefore all living beings are dependent on rain. According to the *Vedic* traditions, rains result from *Vedic* rituals, various sacrifices and oblations. Gods, satisfied with the oblations, provide us with plenty of rain for a good harvest. In an indirect sense rain comes from toils of sacrifice, as water is evaporated by the intense solar heat during summer month which forms cloud. This summer heat is also symbolic of the sacrifice of nature for the welfare of its children. Therefore all sacrifices are results of actions.

Actions arise from *Brahman* in the form of *Vedas*, the eternal source of knowledge and actions. The rituals of sacrifices are provided in the *Vedas*, following which pious kings can oblige gods to provide us with a bountiful harvest. The *Vedas* as source of all knowledge originate from the eternal and imperishable *Brahman*. Therefore the all pervading *Brahman* is ever present in all forms of sacrifices.

*Upanishads*, a part of the *Vedas*, which deals with knowledge of the Supreme Being, declares *Brahman* as everything and everything as *Brahman*. The Supreme Being who pervades everything is ever present in all actions of nature. It is He who ensures balance and harmony, who establishes and mandates the natural and universal laws. Therefore Lord *Krishna* here explains the supreme nature of all actions. Behind all actions is the divine will, which ensures that through these sacrificial actions all living beings can live in harmony and prosper together.

One who desist from sacrificial actions, in sharing the labors of his toil with nature, being deluded by sense pleasures, lives in vain as his actions are mired in selfishness.

### **ACTION WITHOUT ATTACHMENT**

Lord *Krishna* now described a person who would be completely unattached towards action and the fruits. That type of person will rejoice in contemplating on Self or *Atman* and is ever contented. Such a person will not undergo any action. He does not have any interest in activities done or not done, nor does he have any dependence on anybody. Completely free from obligations and dependencies such a person is ever blissful.

Lord *Krishna* explains here the characteristics of a person who would be free from the obligation of being a participant in the universal cycle of sacrifices as depicted above. Not every person can attain such a stature of inaction. Therefore he advises *Arjuna*, “Always perform actions and duties without attachment. Being detached from the work performed one can attain the Supreme Goal. “

He goes on further elaborating this concept by giving examples. “It is only through action that king *Janaka* and others like him attained perfection. One should perform action solely for the purpose of welfare of the world, even though one is fit for the state of inaction. This is because multitude will follow the ideals and lives of great men. Therefore whatever great men do, have got huge implications for the future course of the world.”

Sri Krishna further said citing His own example, “Even I, get involved in action even though I have nothing to accomplish in these three worlds, no heights to achieve and nothing to obtain. If I do not perform my duties diligently and untiringly, multitudes that follow me will become slothful, which would put this world into grave danger. There will be chaos everywhere owing to non performance of assigned duties and responsibilities.”

If the Supreme Being, the prime mover of this Universe, the great force which controls everything, which is behind every action and thought and every natural process, stops from acting, the entire universe will come to a naught. Therefore it is preordained that, ever watchful and wakeful, God will supervise all actions and yet, not get involved in any of them. He is the actor and through all universal beings He acts, being their latent force. If He stops acting, everything will be destroyed and thus to sustain the Universe He works even though He is well poised to destroy it at any moment, just like a child who plays with his toy this moment and destroys it a moment later only to get a new toy.

While the ignorant works mainly through ego and attachment for satisfaction of desires, the wise works in a detached way, merely for the welfare of humanity. That’s why great saints in all ages, despite achieving

the pinnacle of spiritual glory, come down and mingle with ordinary folks, to help them to find peace and joy. They do not have to work, and yet they work selflessly, for the benefit of the mankind.

The Lord cautions that a wise man should let the ignorant work according to his disposition, while himself working in harmony with the divine wish. This is because if a wise stops working by renouncing action, an ignorant will follow his footsteps, thinking that idleness and inactivity is the ideal state. An ignorant does not understand the difference between renunciation of action and idleness. Therefore the best course for him is to work. Through work he can gain knowledge and experience and thereby advance spiritually.

## WHAT COMPELS ACTIONS

It is the qualities of our nature that impels us to perform various actions. Everybody acts according to his/her nature. There are three qualities, viz. *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*, which constitute knowledge, activity and ignorance resp. These three, in various quantities are present in every human being and it is these three qualities that make up the nature of every individual and determine his/her inherent traits and characters. These three qualities and their traits are explained at length in Chapter 14 of *Gita*.

Therefore even though we act under the hypnotic spell of these three qualities, we, being deluded by our ego, consider “ourselves” as the doer.

However the wise, who realizes the effects of qualities of nature on action, truly knows that the three qualities and their traits drive an individual and are the real doers. Therefore it is nature which acts, not the Self. A realized soul, who is verily established in the Self or *Atman*, is passive as *Atman* is a passive and mute witness as he knows himself to be distinct from his nature. Therefore he is never attached to any work or its fruits. Can anybody be ever attached to a work that he does not do? It is the ignorant who, deluded by the nature thinks that it is he who is performing all activities and is therefore attached to the results. Such ignorance cannot be

dispelled unless there is a realization from within, and therefore wise should not try to merely “educate” the ignorant and unsettle his disposition. Better let them work and gain knowledge and wisdom from within.

Lord *Krishna* now arrives at a profound conclusion. Actions are necessary but they should be performed in a detached manner, renouncing the fruits or personal gains. Actions should be selfless. Selfish action is sin. However to link them all together in the context of the impending battle, He advises *Arjuna* to fight, but first by surrendering all actions unto Him, seeking no hope or selfish gain, concentrating all the while on the Self, freed from passion. This is the state of meditation and therefore what *Sri Krishna* says here is that even fighting can be a meditation and worship of the Lord. Every work can be worship or meditation if performed with the right spirit. That would free the worker from bondages of dissatisfaction, dismay and despondence. As Swami Vivekananda had said, we move from a state of "work as worship" to "work is worship". That is the essence of Karma Yoga.

*Sri Krishna* proclaims that whoever will follow these principles of selfless action without attachment, sacrifice and renunciation of fruits regularly and with *Sraddha* or sincerity, will be freed from fetters of *Karma*. However those who, out of contempt, will not follow these principles will be devoid of all knowledge and hence will have a bleak prospect. This is not a threat, but rather a universal rule which the Lord mandates. Selfless action leads to salvation or *Moksha* from bondages, while mere action binds. Those who try to follow the path of selfless action sincerely are able to achieve it by God’s grace. Their sincerity counts. Those who are ignorant and hence do not follow, still have some hope as when true knowledge dawns upon them they will be able to follow this path. However those who treat these contemptuously, ridiculing the ideas of ‘selfless work’ and surrendering of fruits, they cannot gain knowledge because of their own nature. They are therefore destined to suffer time and again being unable to come out of the state of ignorance.



## NATURE'S IMPACT

The Lord then says that everybody tries to act according to his or her nature, even those who are wise about the nature's influence on individuals. It's the nature that drives individuals, what would any form of repression do? This is directed towards *Arjuna*, who despite being a *Kshatriya*, does not wish to fight. The nature of a warrior is to fight in a battle. We'll see in the later chapters that *Krishna* bluntly tells *Arjuna* that even if the latter does not wish to fight, his nature will impel him to fight.

In the senses and in the objects of the senses are the twin traits of attraction and repulsion. One would love a sweet fragrance of a flower while he would detest the foul odor coming from a dustbin. Thus the sense of smell and the objects in the form of flower and garbage are responsible for triggering the twin traits of attraction (of sweet fragrance) and repulsion (from the foul odor). These are the enemies in the path of wisdom and therefore one aspiring to be perfect should not capitulate to these twin tendencies.

In fact attraction and repulsion are just the two sides of the same coin. It is seen that things which generated attraction at one point of time may become object of repulsion in later periods or in a different context. If one suffers from dyspepsia can one enjoy the good food which was so tasteful even a few years back? Our nature enjoins us to love or hate the objects of senses. We should understand this ploy of the nature and should not yield to the tendencies generated.

Driven by repulsion for war Arjuna wants to quit the battle, but it was the attraction of the battle that brought him face to face with the enemy. Unless he gets over these twin traits his judgment will be clouded and he will not be able to get over the pangs of anxiety that has robbed him his peace. In our life also if we do not rise above these twin tendencies, we'll find ourselves in similar confusion and will be devoid of peace without knowing with certainty what to do.

To link the previous assertions of the Lord, one can only rise above these twin enemies if one performs action for the sake of it, without desiring the

fruits. The attraction for success and revulsion for failure will not cloud our judgment. By surrendering the fruits of actions to God, by not being attached to the actions performed, we'll be able to overcome our nature.

Lord *Krishna* then says that in order to overcome nature one should always act in conformity with it. Even if a different nature may seem more appealing and actions related to it may be performed with ease, it is far more sensible to die performing actions related to one's own nature than adopt another. Going against one's very nature does not help one in overcoming nature, but rather results in disharmony and inner conflict.

*Arjuna* is a *Kshatriya* and therefore to fight a righteous battle against a vicious enemy is his nature. Even if non violence is a better way, it is not suited for him as it is against his nature. If he tries to perform something which does not gel well with his inherent traits, the consequences are disastrous. If we take the war into consideration, adoption of non violence by *Arjuna* would mean that his brothers will not stand a chance against *Bhisma*, *Drona*, *Karna* and other great warriors of the *Kuru* clan. The evil reign of *Duryadhana* will continue to flourish. Moreover *Arjuna's* own nature will not leave him in peace if he adopts such a course of action or non action. Nature was the primary basis for classification and categorization of the four *Varnas* and *Ashramas*. Everybody is bound by certain duties which are in conformity with his/her nature. Unless one performs those duties with utmost sincerity, one goes against the nature and thereby begets sin. Any disquietude of mind is sin and nature will create major problems for him if he tries to go against it.

The Lord thus addresses directly the question asked by a confused *Arjuna* at the beginning of this chapter after explaining in depth his assertion.

## CLOUDING OF INTELLECT

*Arjuna* now asks, "How does, Oh *Varshneya*, people commit sins, even without wishing it, as if forced by a strong hand of destiny?"



You are saying, my Lord, that nature is all powerful; it compels us to act in conformity with itself. The twin traits force us to choose one path over another and lead us to confusion. Often we try to act against our very nature in order to find peace, thus landing in greater trouble. So who is responsible for all transgressions?

*Sri Krishna* then answers, “It is *Kama* or desire, *Krodha* or anger, the twin passions, both stemming from the *guna* of *Rajas* or activity. These are all devouring, evil traits. Consider them to be two powerful enemies of mankind.”

It is one of the qualities of nature that leads mankind to commit sin. The persons who possess that quality of nature in abundance over the other two are more prone to fall victim to evil propensities. This is the quality of *Rajas* and the traits desire and anger qualify *Rajas*. An excess of *Rajas* is often associated with lust, greed, desire, pride and sinful actions. *Raja guna* is all passion – passion for power, wealth, name and fame. Uncontrolled and unchecked, it can destroy an individual through uninhibited ambition and lust.

In the earlier chapter the Lord had explained how anger stems from desire. Therefore desire is the root cause of the evil tendencies.

As the smoke covers the fire, as the dust covers (the brightness of) the mirror, as womb envelopes the fetus, so is true knowledge or intellect clouded by desire.

Knowledge is thus hidden by desire, the eternal enemy of wisdom. Desire is like a flame that is all engulfing, that never goes down.

We thus come to know why *Lord Krishna* advocates action without desire for fruits. It is desire that clouds judgment and impels a man towards sinful activities. It is desire that robs one of peace by forcing one to act against one’s very nature. It is desire that fuels ego and makes one think oneself as the doer of all actions and thus fans ignorance.

The desire sits in the senses, in the mind and in intellect. With the help of these it bewilders the indweller, the seat of knowledge. True knowledge

thus overcome by senses, mind and the intellect clouded by desire, can never reveal itself. This is the reason for all confusion pertaining to virtue and duty in *Arjuna's* mind.

The Lord therefore advises *Arjuna* to first control the senses, where sits the desire. Through complete control of senses one would be able to master over desire and recover the hidden knowledge.

Senses are great, powerful, greater than the senses is the mind, the controlling power behind senses, greater than mind is intellect, which governs the impulses of the mind and enables one to take right judgment. However greater than all is true knowledge of Self.

This true knowledge is also the *Atman*, the all revealing, all knowing and all pervading Self, the indweller who does not perish even if body, mind and intellect perish.

The Lord then summarizes, "Oh noble soul! Know this true knowledge as the greatest, conquer your (lesser) self by the (greater) self, and win over this strong foe called desire."

By winning over desire one is able to act without desire. One then establishes oneself in true knowledge and uncovers the hidden Self. This is the basic principle behind Yoga or communion.

## CHAPTER 4 - YOGA OF SPIRITUAL WISDOM OR JNANA

Lord *Krishna* further said, “The knowledge of this yoga was first taught by me to *Vivasvat*. *Vivasvat* narrated this to *Manu* and *Manu* told this to *Ikshaku*, all great kings of the yore. This knowledge, thus handed over from generation to generation by these royal sages, somehow got lost over the years. Today, I am going to tell you this ancient yoga, the supreme secret, for you are my friend and devotee.”

Only a devoted disciple is fit for knowledge which is supreme in nature. The royal sages were fit for the knowledge because they could know and apply the principles of *Karma Yoga*, yoga in action. Many other people could then follow their paths. In the Chapter 3, *Sri Krishna* had already said that another royal sage *Janaka* attained perfection through the yoga of action. Now it's the turn of *Arjuna* to gain the same knowledge.

*Arjuna* asked politely, “*Vivasvat* was born in the ancient age, much before your birth, so how do I comprehend that it was you who imparted this knowledge to *Vivasvat*?”

Do we see a trace of doubt in this sentence? Skepticism is an accepted stage in the path of spirituality. One should not accept everything just because it is told by the *Guru*. *Gita* encourages free and rational thinking.

Lord *Krishna* is very patient because He knows that such doubts are bound to come. He is ready to reveal Himself to dispel all doubts. He says, “You and I have taken birth many times, of which I know everything while you know little. Though I am unborn, eternal Self and Lord of all beings, controlling the nature I take birth through my divine power called *Maya*.”

This is a major point in the entire *Gita*, where the Lord provides a glimpse of His true nature for the first time. This is the dawn of knowledge for *Arjuna*, and hence the yoga of spiritual wisdom assumes much importance.

The Lord declares, “Whenever virtue subsides and vice prevails, I project myself, to protect the innocents and virtuous from the onslaught of the evil,

to trample the wrong doers to reestablish the rule of universal law of harmony and peace.”

This is a message of universal hope, esp. for the devotees. We’ll see later in the Gita that whatever paths one may follow, one’s worship will ultimately reach the same universal spirit. Therefore devotees are not restricted to any particular religion or path of worship and thus this message is universal. The same divine spirit appears as Christ or Buddha or Rama or Krishna or Ramakrishna in different ages, in different places and environments and adapts the teachings to the environment and culture. He comes to fulfill, not to destroy.

The Lord further says, “My birth and work are both divine, and one who is able to understand them, after departure from the world he comes unto Me.”

An incarnate who is the personification of God for the devotees, does not take birth like a mere mortal. There are some special traits associated with the birth of the divine Lord. Likewise His work is also not ordinary. A divine incarnate takes His birth not under the influence of nature or *Maya*, but by controlling *Maya*. When He lives in a mortal body, He is like an ordinary mortal, but there is always that subtle divine trait which is recognizable to His devotees. Only His ardent devotees can recognize Him. Others, under the spell of *Maya*, treat Him as an ordinary mortal. Some becomes His enemy being jealous of His power and influence, while others treat Him contemptuously. These are all part of His *Leela* or divine play. His devotees who are able to recognize Him through His grace become liberated, as God and His divine incarnate are one and same.

## THE DAWN OF WISDOM

Those who come to realize the true identify of God after performing many austerities, after acquiring that supreme knowledge become purified and devoid of all passions like anger, fear and attachment. They are devoted unto the Lord and have completely surrendered to Him. Thus they attain Him and are liberated from the fetters of life.

Lord *Krishna* now proclaims, “Whoever worships Me in whichever way, I reach out to him in the same way, every path leads unto Me.”

The message of *Gita* is Universal because it is not restricted to any religion or nation. The Supreme Lord cannot be narrow minded so as to prescribe one particular path for all and doomsday for others who do not follow that path. *Gita* is liberal as it proclaims that all paths are ways and means of reaching out to God if that path is followed sincerely. As the manifold rivers and streams coming down from mountain ultimately converge into the vast ocean, so also various paths prescribed in various scriptures and by various holy men converge into God. *Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa* had further illustrated this using a simple day to day example. A mother has five children at home. When she cooks fish she cooks dishes according to the taste, preference and disposition of every child. For one she cooks a fish curry, for another a fried fish, for yet another soup and so on. In a similar way, because of various cultural dispositions, taste and preferences people worship the Supreme Being in different ways, but all these ways are means of reaching out to Him.

In this world, people seek for rewards through sacrifices and actions intended for various gods. The fruits come easily as these myriad gods are verily the various forms of the Supreme Being who grants the wish fulfillment. It is the Lord who created the system of castes based on the qualities of nature and the disposition towards action. Even though He is the Lord of every action and quality, He is not limited by qualities and above all actions. Though all actions are directed to Him and He controls all actions, He is not attached to actions, nor does He desire the fruits of the actions. Whoever knows this true nature of Him will not be bound by the fetters of action.

If lesser gods are propitiated they have the power to grant boons for fulfilling material desires. But they cannot grant liberation or freedom from Karma, because they themselves are not liberated. Every action has its origin in God and is directed towards God, knowingly or unknowingly. If all actions are consciously directed towards God without desiring the fruits, they lead to liberation from bondages. Caste system is a system based upon qualities of nature and disposition towards specific types of

action. A *Brahmin* is one of *Sattvik* nature while a *Kshatriya* is predominantly *Rajasik*. A *Vaisya* is a mix of *Rajasik* and *Tamasik* nature while a *Sudra* is predominantly *Tamasik*. Therefore whosoever is *Sattvik* can be treated as a *Brahmin*, while one who is *Tamasik*, a *Sudra*. *Sattva* stands for knowledge, *Rajas* for activity and *Tamas* for ignorance (of the spiritual truths). *Gita* also postulates in a later chapter as to how action can be categorized into these three qualities. A *Brahmin* is disposed towards *Sattvik* form of work like worship and knowledge accumulation, a *Kshatriya* towards *Rajasik* form like warfare and protection of the weak, a *Vaisya* of mixed nature like agriculture and trade, while a *Sudra* is disposed towards predominantly *Tamasik* form of work.

The liberation seeking ancestors knew the Lord's true nature and worshipped Him in this way through oblations. Their actions were dedicated towards God and this should be the ideal way of working for all who are seeking deliverance.

Lord *Krishna* now tells *Arjuna*, "Even wise men and sages are perplexed on the subtle differences between action and inaction. I shall teach you those actions by which you will be free from all sins."

The path of action is mysterious and deep. It is therefore necessary to discriminate and understand action, improper action, and inaction and the subtle differences that exist among them. Lord is now poised to teach *Arjuna* that very lesson.

What is right and what is wrong? What are virtues and vices? What actions should one perform and what should not be performed? What is better, to renounce active life and become a mendicant or to live a life of actions? These are questions that trouble even the wise and learned. Some prefer inactive life over active life, while the very purpose of existence for others is dynamism.

Actions are there in inactions while inaction rests in action. One who is able to perceive this truth, is harmonious with God and nature and is able to grasp the entire concept of action.



It is possible to act in perfect stillness. One who has perfected this act is a master Yogi. That person is not perturbed even under intense action and can remain free from desire. Another may not be engaged in action but the action is inherent as even the inaction is intended for general welfare and is directed towards God.

## **REAL WISDOM - THE KNOWLEDGE OF BRAHMAN**

*Sri Krishna* now explains to *Arjuna* the characteristics of people who are above all subtleties of actions. A person whose actions are devoid of desire and are annealed by the fire of wisdom is called wise by the learned. This means that such persons are firmly established in wisdom, they have realized the ineffectiveness of seeking profits in actions because all profits are non lasting. Even highest heavens are temporary. With their desires thus quenched through renunciation these wise men are ever content, never seeking any refuge anywhere. Even when engaged in action they are not acting. They are devoid of all hopes and their mind and senses are firmly controlled. They neither seek nor have any desire of any worldly gains. By performing only bodily functions they do not incur sins. They are satisfied by whatever that comes to them with the least of effort, they are above all dualities like good and evil, happiness and sorrow and they are ever free of pettiness like jealousy. They are indifferent to success and failure of actions and are therefore are immune to the bondage resulting from actions.

These are all the traits of Yogis who are stationed in the perpetual state of bliss. They have no need for any action and even if they act, the actions are completely selfless and directed towards God. These persons, ever free from attachment and liberated from all worldly fetters, intellect firmly established in wisdom, perform actions through sacrifice, whose effects subsequently melts away, i.e. these actions cannot bind them.

*Sri Krishna* then explains the nature of the sacrifices which drive the actions of the wise. In Chapter 3 He had advised *Arjuna* to perform actions only as sacrifice, free from all desires. Such sacrifices may be of various types. For these sacrifices, the eternal Supreme Being or the *Brahman* is the oblation,



He is the ladle for pouring the oblation, it is He who is the clarified butter used for sacrifices, it is again He who is the sacrificial fire and He is verily the being who is offering (the officiating priest). Those who thus mediate upon the *Brahman* go verily unto *Brahman*.

*Sarvam khalu idam Brahman* or everywhere verily is *Brahman* – This is called True Knowledge. Therefore one who is performing any sacrifice established in the knowledge that offerings and oblations, sacrificial fire and the officiating priest, i.e. all the means of obtaining the goal are the end themselves, is ever free. Knowing everything to be the supreme *Brahman*, the means as well as the end of all actions, such a person will have no desire left. Action is then for action's sake, not for the fruit.

### TYPES OF SACRIFICES

There are various kinds of sacrifices. In fact all actions can be classified as sacrifices. Some yogis (desiring fruits like heaven and material well being) offer oblations unto various gods while others, the wise ones (sans any desire), offer them to the supreme.

Others meditate by offering the various sense organs into the fire of self control, while still others worship by offering the objects of the senses like smell, touch, sound etc. into the fire of the sense organs.

The worships performed and sacrifices performed are of various kinds. While some persons may control their senses by turning them away from the resp. objects of senses through a complete control of the mind and the sense organs, there are some who would despite the temptations of the sense objects, remain equipoise. Some Yogis, despite the pangs of hunger and the temptation of nicely prepared food, may not be attracted by good food, while others may remain indifferent to the very taste of the food itself, i.e. good or bad does not matter to them. All what matters to them is God and the ways and means of obtaining Him. Thus senses or the sense objects which are biggest obstacles in the path of God realization are sacrificed for the sake of the eternal truth.

There are still others who would sacrifice all actions related to sense organs and life into the fire of self control. These master Yogis, meditate by being

detached from all external influences and their temptations, ever immersed in the thought of God.

*Sri Krishna* then illustrated the various forms of sacrifices that are performed – the sacrifice of material offerings, the sacrifice done through the performance of Yoga, or ascetic penances, or the sacrifice of gaining wisdom through study of Vedas, all performed by ascetics and sages.

Another form of sacrifice is the *Pranayama*, an intrinsic part of Raja Yoga, whereby the *Prana* or the vital force within the body is controlled by various means. *Pranayama* consists of three steps to control the life force and the mind – *Rechaka* or breathing out, *Puraka* or breathing in, and *Kumbhaka* or holding the breath within. These three steps are synchronized carefully as if they are harmonious and complement one another. This is the sacrifice of the vital forces in the fire of the vital forces, for the purpose of controlling the life forces and bodily functions.

There are still others who would, through various ascetic practices like moderate eating (fasting), sacrifice a part of their life force into the fire of asceticism. All these sacrifices destroy sin.

Sacrifice denotes an activity towards realization of God in a step by step way, through renunciation. The renunciation can be of various forms – of material objects, of sense objects and temptations, of external objects of attraction and selfish actions, of nourishment of body and life forces, of idleness of mind and intellect. Every sacrifice is thus a way by which accumulated sins get destroyed through penance and austerities. One who accepts sacrifices as a way of life and thereby sustain themselves, progresses towards the path of realizing the eternal *Brahman*. Others who avoid sacrifices and indulge only in self pleasures by pursuing selfish actions have no place in this world and hereafter.

In the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter we have seen how sacrifices are an intrinsic way of living in harmony with the community, by giving and receiving. One who does not follow that mode of life and lives entirely selfishly without contributing to the society lives a vain life. Such a person is the real sinner who only receives and does not give. Every form of giving is an oblation to a certain

form of fire, be it fire of life forces or fire of knowledge or the fire of self control and renunciation. *Lord Krishna* elaborates further on the principle of sacrifices as to how these are essential to the realization of the Supreme Truth. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> Chapter He also explains that the sacrifices without desire for fruits are the best means of obtaining true knowledge and here He explains the various means for the same.

“All the sacrifices are spread from the mouth of the *Brahman*, but know them to be born of action. Such knowledge leads to liberation. Of all forms of sacrifices, better than sacrifice of material offerings, is the sacrifice that cultivates wisdom. All actions (performed without desire) culminate into wisdom. Such knowledge is only to be gained by a worthy disciple through devotion, sincere questions and service from a preceptor who would himself possess the supreme knowledge. Possessing this knowledge, Oh *Pandava*, you shall never be deluded again. By the help of this knowledge (of *Brahman*), you will see your Self in all beings, i.e. Me in all and all in Me.”

*Lord Krishna* establishes again, as in 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter, that all sacrifices and all actions have their root in the eternal imperishable *Brahman*. However here He imparts a special knowledge, that all actions, if performed without desire results in purification of the mind and spirit and through that purification process one is able to get hold of special knowledge. The dirt and grime that covers the mirror gets cleaned through such unselfish and noble work. However, to get the true knowledge one must approach a preceptor who is himself possessor of that knowledge in the true spirit of humility and service.

### **SPIRITUAL WISDOM (JNANA) AND ITS IMPACT**

The true knowledge of *Brahman* will help in dispelling any darkness which leads one into delusion. The knowledge of eternal *Brahman* enables one to see the entire world as *Brahman* and not through the veil of *Maya* or the great bewitching power of God.

*Sri Krishna* further assured *Arjuna* that even if *Arjuna* has committed gravest of sins, he can, through the raft of wisdom, cross over to the other

side (virtue). This is because the fire of wisdom reduces the actions and their ill effects to ashes, just as the burning fire reduces the fuel to ashes. In time, the perfected Yogi finds that there is nothing more purifier than knowledge. True knowledge helps in unveiling the Self and thus catapults one to realize the supreme truth, also called the knowledge of *Brahman*.

One who is earnest seeker, full of *Sraddha*, one who is ever devoted and intent on realization, one who has mastery over the senses, can obtain the true knowledge, and by gaining the true knowledge can beget everlasting peace and joy. Such a person tears asunder the veil of *Maya* and thereby rises above sorrows and sufferings in the *Samsara*. The wisdom helps him in realizing that the life and universe is nothing but a dream and the source of real bliss is within one's Self.

One who is ignorant (of such knowledge), one who is not earnest or has little faith and one who doubts the efficacy or the existence of true knowledge, all these have no means of salvation. Doubts and lack of faith leads one into blind alleys from which there is no return to the path of virtue and wisdom.

He who has renounced every action and its fruits, he who has been able to get rid of all doubts by means of the true knowledge, he who is immersed in Self, has no fear as actions cannot bind them.

"Therefore, Oh *Arjuna*, rise! Cut asunder this doubt, the evil bewitching deluding power, by the help of the sword of wisdom and discrimination and be firmly established in Yoga, the ancient means of gaining wisdom."

*Sri Krishna* says that the only way true knowledge can be obtained is through removal of all doubts from our mind. This is possible with the help of sword of discrimination and knowledge. Having intense faith on one's preceptor who is responsible for showing the way to the source of true knowledge, one needs to be earnest, devoted to the goal of realizing God and practice with sincerity to control the senses. Having gained mastery over the senses, one can perform actions without desire and through that purify the mind and intellect. Through this purification process the knowledge reveals itself, like the sun shining on a bright and

clear pool of water free of all contaminations. This is the Yoga of Spiritual Wisdom.

## CHAPTER 5: YOGA OF RENUNCIATION

Having heard the discourse so far, a confused *Arjuna* asked, “*Krishna*, you have eulogized both renunciation and action. But pray let me know that of these two which is better.”

*Sri Krishna* answered, “Know this for sure that both renunciation and *Karma yoga* are meritorious. However, of these two, *Karma yoga* is definitely better. Know him to an all renounced, who has neither repulsion nor attraction. Thus free from the shackles of dual impulses, he is liberated from the fetters (of the world). “

Here *Sri Krishna* is referring to renunciation before being established in knowledge, a state of inaction for an individual who still possesses impulses for action. For such a person, *Karma yoga* is better than complete renunciation of action. This statement is by no means glorifying *Karma yoga* over renunciation, as is evident from the next two *slokas*.

*Sri Krishna* further said in response to *Arjuna* that a wise truly knows that *Sankhya* and *Yoga* are not really different. A person, who is firmly established in one of these two, gets the results of both. *Sankhya* and *Yoga* are essentially same perceived by the seers, as one who treads one path, verily crosses the other. Sages established in one path attain the regions which are attended by those engaged in the other path.

*Sankhya* is the path of knowledge and contemplation while *Yoga* is the path of action. *Sankhya* philosophy was devised by the sage *Kapila*, but here *Sankhya* refers to the path of renunciation of action. *Yoga* sutras were first written by *Patanjali*, but here *Yoga* refers to *Karma*, *Raja* and *Bhakti Yoga*, any path involving action. However the essence of both is liberation from the worldly life through Realization of the One Supreme Being or the True Knowledge.

A life of renunciation without the discipline of *Yoga* is hard to obtain. A sage who has renounced the world and has also established himself in *Yoga*, i.e. a complete control over the passion and the sense objects and a

mastery over the treacherous mind, pretty soon realizes the Supreme Being, *Brahman*.

Established in *Yoga*, and having purified the mind and intellect, one who has thus obtained mastery over the senses, and who is identified as being the soul in all beings, remains unscathed by action.

Action cannot bind one who knows that he is not acting. He has realized the fact that he is not the actual doer. Under the impulse of the external and internal nature certain actions like seeing, hearing touching, smelling, eating, going and coming (movements), sleeping and breathing, vital body functions like speaking, giving and receiving, opening and closing of eyelids (during meditation or sleep), which are performed by him, are known by him as responses of the senses to the stimuli called objects of senses. Therefore he is established in the belief that he is not the performer of even these necessary body functions. He does not identify himself with the body which is subjected to the nature and its modifications including the senses and sense objects.

Therefore he, who places all actions and fruits thereof at the eternal *Brahman* whose modifiable form is nature or *Prakrti*, remains unattached to all actions performed, just as a lotus leaf, though immersed in water, does not get soiled by it. Thereby that person remains immune to any sin as all actions result in some good and some bad results (virtues and vices). By separating himself from the action performed the person does not run the risk of suffering its consequences.

## **WISDOM ARISING FROM RENUNCIATION**

*Yogis* attain purification by performing work through body, mind, intellect and senses, without ever getting attached to those actions.

If one performs an action desirous of results it would imply that the person is attached to the work performed. Therefore detachment comes only through renunciation of fruits and desires. If one studies hard to secure the first grade, one is attached to the study and the outcome. If however, one studies hard, without really desiring any benefit or result, just for the sake



of study, thinking all the while it to be a great worship dedicated to the Lord, one performs an action without attachment. If that study ceases for some reason, or if the outcome is not good despite best efforts, the person is never disappointed. Nor is he elated when he secures a first grade, as he never desired any outcome, positive or negative. He is a real *Sannyasin* who is able to so perform a work without desiring the fruits.

Generally every work is propelled by an objective, a desire. Without desire for a favorable outcome it is very hard to motivate oneself to spend effort. However selfless actions are not driven by selfish motives or desire, but desire for greater common good that would result to humanity from performing that action. This is the definition of a *Yajna* or sacrifice. A true *Sannyasin* therefore does not work for any selfish material gain but for the benefit of all. He dedicates his work and actions unto God.

*Sri Krishna* further expounded this to *Arjuna*, “A person who is harmonious (with the principles of Yoga) will attain supreme bliss by renouncing the fruits of actions, while the non harmonious who is desirous of the fruits, gets tethered to the results of the actions and cannot escape the evil effects and consequent sufferings of actions and desires.”

A realized soul, who is simply an indweller in a body and who is not identified with the body comprising of the nine gates, lives in happiness, by mentally renouncing all actions, without doing or causing anything to happen.

The Supreme Being neither creates ownership of actions, nor actions themselves in the worlds. Nor does he project the union of actions with the consequences. It is the nature that manifests and behaves accordingly. Every individual, propelled by nature will take ownership of actions and will perform actions being desirous of the fruits. Thus driven by his nature, the action performed will bear fruits in due time and he will have to suffer the consequences. Actions do not bear fruit in one lifetime and therefore the individuals repeatedly take birth to reap the fruits of the actions. All actions are produced by individual nature.

One may question, to what extent is one responsible for the actions? *Sri Ramakrishna* said that a cow is tethered in a field and his activities (of grazing) will be within the radius permitted by the rope. So also we have an independence field - a choice, within a certain area. However *Sri Ramakrishna* also said that when true knowledge dawns, one comes to know everything as predetermined - will of the Lord. So how it is that *Gita* proclaims the Supreme Being to be above actions? The answer is that here we should carefully distinguish between *Vibhu* or the non-qualified *Brahman*, and the *Iswara*, or the Lord of all beings possessing different qualities. *Sri Krishna* is talking about impersonal *Brahman* who is inactive. *Iswara* is the *Brahman* modified by qualities of nature, or in other words *Brahman* united with its *Shakti* principle, the principle behind all actions in the Universe. Therefore it is *Iswara*, who is also the nature, who predetermines the actions and consequences of an individual based on the previous stored *Karmas*. This cycle (of *Karma*, its accumulation and its deciding the further *karmas* and circumstances for an individual) goes on for an eternity till the true knowledge dawns and the individual soul is liberated. So an individual is responsible for the actions, which are the results of the nature of the individual, which is again shaped by the past actions, and hence unless he gains the knowledge of the Absolute Truth, he is tethered to the world and goes on accumulating *karma* indefinitely. Actions cannot bind a *jnani*, who has realized the *Brahman* or the *Atman*. Therefore he is liberated and is not responsible for actions. For him, everything is predetermined and there is no free will. In other words, his will has become God's will.

The *Brahman* is not responsible for vices and virtues. He is above these pairs of opposites. He is indifferent towards good or evil. Good or evil and such pairs of opposites only appear for individuals, who, ever immersed in ignorance, are deluded (by *Maya* or the great bewitching force). It is ignorance that enables one to conceive all forms of pairs of opposites like good and bad, pleasure and pain, hope and despair, ecstasy and agony. The Supreme Being is far beyond them. Without realizing the pairs or opposites as unreal one cannot realize the Supreme Being. Pairs of opposites cannot be breached as long as one is under the clutches of nature or *Maya*. Nature cannot be conquered without renunciation of desires.

One, who has however realized his Self through the light of the eternal knowledge, by the self, the Supreme Being is verily revealed to him. This eternal knowledge is again not realizable without renunciation of desire and hence renunciation is the key driving factor behind realization of the Truth. Such individuals, always thinking of That (Supreme Truth), ever immersed in That, firmly established in That and devoted to That, are liberated from the cycles of life and death, purified by the knowledge of the Self.

#### CHARACTERISTICS TRAITS OF A KNOWER OF BRAHMAN

The knowledge of Brahman enables one to view everything and everybody in equal light, be it a learned *Brahmin* endowed with humility or a cow or an elephant, a dog or an outcaste.

A knower of the Self sees the Self in all beings. To him there is no difference in status and caste, between animals and humans, between lower and higher forms of animals. He sees the Lord who pervades everything and everybody and therefore treats every being equally, without any prejudice.

A person whose mind is tranquil and who is established firmly in *Brahman* has already conquered all creation while living in this world. He is as blameless as the *Brahman* Himself and therefore, verily, he is *Brahman*. He is not enthused by getting what is pleasant, nor is he disturbed by getting something unpleasant. Being of steady intellect and not deluded (by *Maya*), the knower of *Brahman* is established in *Brahman*.

The *jivanmukta* person is free from all worldly fetters and therefore is indifferent to worldly desires and gains, pleasures and pains and work only for the benefit of all beings out of compassion.

Such a person is also indifferent to external world of senses and sense objects like touch and feel, sensual pleasures and pains. He rejoices by living inward, immersed in Self and drawing great joy out of the knowledge of Self. This person is thus in constant communion with God or *Brahman*, and he enjoys the eternal bliss derived from the mighty fountain of knowledge of *Brahman*. The enjoyment arising out of sensory pleasures

is in effect cause of miseries and pain because these are fleeting, transient, non permanent. Once the pleasure ends it torments with the memories or it often comes with painful consequences. Therefore wise never derives happiness out of sense pleasures.

Watch an enjoyable movie or sports, visit a scenic spot, tour another country or enjoy the company of friends – all these are sense pleasures. They are enjoyable while they last. After the enjoyment is over only imprints and memories are left which cause miseries. Sorrows often accompany joy. So no enjoyment of senses is lasting. Therefore taking recourse to sense enjoyment is fool's errand.

The Lord further said, "Oh *Arjuna*, forbearance is a great capacity. One who is able to bear the onslaughts of desire and passion before he (the soul or *Atman*) is liberated from the body, is happy. He is in constant bliss, in a *yoga* state."

One who endures pains associated with desires, anger and other passions, without capitulating to the vagaries of mind and senses, who is able to exercise wonderful self control, is truly liberated (from slaveries of passion). Such a person is in bliss forever because worldly sorrows and tribulations do not affect him. Such a person rejoices from within, derives pleasure from an infinite source (the Self) within and is illuminated from within. He thereby receives the grace of *Brahman* and is liberated even while being on this world (*jivanmukti*).

The sages, thus being the recipient of the infinite source of bliss, the *Brahman*, have their sins destroyed, are free from dualities or pairs or opposites like pleasure and pain, birth and death, good and evil etc, are perfectly self controlled, and are only engaged in the welfare of all living beings. They are free of all desires and hence they are true *Sannyasins*.

Such persons are devoid of desires and anger, established in Self and have all their passions and senses under control. They are constantly near the ocean of bliss called *Brahman* after realizing that verily they are *Brahman* themselves. Realizing the Self is also realizing *Brahman* or the Supreme

Being. For the realized soul the world is *Maya* or non reality and therefore he cannot allow his senses to run amok amongst the worldly pleasures.

He is thus indifferent to the external world. He sits in a yogic posture with extreme inward concentration letting the external world vanish, controlling the breath using *Pranayama*.

With all his senses, mind and intellect, the sage is intent upon liberation or *Moksha*. Devoid of desire, fear or anger and other passions, the person is ever blissful.

Lord Krishna concluded his discourse on renunciation saying that, “by knowing Me, the Supreme Being as the master of all worlds, as the enjoyer of all oblations and austerities (sacrifices), as the friend and lover of all beings, these great yogis or sages attain everlasting peace.”

By renouncing desire and fruits of actions, by controlling passions and by remaining detached from worldly objects one is able to realize Self and thereby attain supreme knowledge. This knowledge or realization is equivalent to realizing God as Self or Supreme Being is God. Therefore such a person is entitled to an eternal spring of joy and bliss which is never derived from material and worldly sense pleasures which are fleeting in nature. Thus liberated the person beholds every object and being in this world as manifestation of *Brahman* and derives bliss from an inexhaustible source from within.

## CHAPTER 6: THE YOGA OF MEDITATION

Lord *Krishna* further said, “One who performs actions without desiring the fruits thereof, is the real *Sannyasin* and *Yogi*, not the one who has merely renounced householder life including the sacred fire and the rites.”

A *Sannyasin* is no longer eligible to light the sacred fire of sacrifices, nor is he able to perform rites and rituals as prescribed in the *Vedas*. These are all meant for householders who earn merits through such actions. However by mere renunciation of the sacred fire and the rituals one does not become a *Sannyasin*. It is the renunciation of desire that demarcates renunciation from non renunciation. Therefore one who has renounced the fruits of actions, which are the manifestations of desires, is a true *Sannyasin*.

The Lord continued in the same vein, “That which is called *Sannyas* or renunciation is also called *Yoga*. One who has not renounced desires cannot become a *Yogi*.”

Action is the only means of propelling a sage to the path of *Yoga*. Actions like oblations, sacrifices, meditation and worship enables one to advance in the path of *Yoga*. However one who is established in *Yoga*, serenity or contemplation is the means (of staying in the course).

One who is neither swayed by the senses nor by the actions, does not become attached to them, and has renounced all desires and will, is established in *Yoga*.

One must be able to render help to the soul or spirit within so that it does not fall, through dejection, depression or deprivation (of spiritual knowledge). The self is the true friend of one self, the self is the enemy. One can be enemy of oneself when one allows his soul to fall through perpetration of evil and through perpetuation of ignorance. A fallen soul is characterized by extreme unhappiness because the light of knowledge and bliss never ignites the soul. One is a true friend of oneself when he is able to enlighten the soul through his spiritual quest, by dispelling the darkness of ignorance. However one is a sworn enemy of oneself who makes no



such attempt, but rather weakens the soul through transgressions, misdeeds, depression and laziness.

One who has conquered the soul in the end, is blissful and is ever united with God, remains indifferent to the pairs of opposites like happiness and misery, hot and cold, and honor and dishonor. The *Yogi* who is thus firmly established in the knowledge of higher Self and is a master of all passions and senses, treats gold, a lump of mud and stone equally. He has no greed and no intention to acquire wealth for material prosperity. To him it matters not whether he turns a pauper or a prince. He treats everybody equally including friends, enemies, sinners, saints, relatives, his haters and wrongdoers and even those who are not known to him. There is no preference or attachment to anybody. Equanimity is a chief characteristic of a *Yogi*. Such a *Yogi* always remains hidden (from society), immersed in Self, ever free from hopes and desires (of materialistic gain).

How does one become such a *Yogi*? Lord *Krishna* also answers this.

## THE SCIENCE OF YOGA

To become a *Yogi* one has to first sit in the right posture in the right place. The right place should be pure (free from impurities, dirt and dust), the seat should be fixed and neither very low, nor very high, covered with *kusha* grasses, deer skin and cloth, one over the other.

For *Yoga* intense concentration is the key. *Dhyana* is continuous thought of an entity, preferably God or His divine play. Absence of any thought is also *dhyana* but that requires even higher concentration as that would mean the dissolution of mind.

The right seat is essential as it helps in concentration. Places devoid of impurities are essential as they do not divert the mind. All these however are for one who is a beginner in the path of *Yoga*. For an established *Yogi*, neither the place, nor time nor these details matter as he is able to commune with God according to his own will.



There, in that seat with one pointed concentration and devotion, controlling the mind and senses one should meditate for communion or Yoga and in the process get rid of the dirt accumulated within.

The effect of all the desires of this life and impressions or *Sanskaras* of past lives is to make the mind and the soul impure and dirty. *Sanskaras* also originate from desires. In Chapter 3 we have seen that the Self or *Atman* is like a mirror covered with the dirt of desire. Therefore the purpose of *Yoga* is to get rid of that accumulated dirt which is also called sin and to purify the body, mind and soul.

One should sit straight in the Yoga posture with body, head and neck in the same straight line without any bending or movement. This posture helps in developing concentration. The gaze should be fixed at the tip of nose, without minding anything else in the vicinity.

Its not the tip of the nose that matters, but intense concentration. To make sure that the eyes do not wander a steady gaze at a particular point is recommended. One can also close eyes and meditate.

Lord *Krishna* said, “A *Yogi*, with serene and calm mind, devoid of any worry or anxiety, firm in the vow of celibacy or *Brahmacharya*, will thus devote his entire concentration on Me and aspiring Me, the Supreme Lord beyond all the universe. Thus harmonized and in constant contemplation of the Self with one pointed devotion, the *Yogi* gets profound bliss called *Nirvana* which resides in Me. “

*Sri Krishna* then explained to *Arjuna* who all can become a *Yogi* and what happens in the *Yogic* state.

One who takes too much food, or one who fasts too much, or one who sleeps or stays awake too long cannot become a *Yogi*. To be a *yogi* one has to be moderate in every undertaking – in eating and in resting, in activities and in sleep. Thus by harmonizing and balancing every act one can remove miseries through *Yoga*.

This is because any of the above when done in excess leads to disharmony and dysfunction of body and mind. A dysfunctional body and mind are not at all effective for *Yoga*.

That mind, which, bereft of all desires, is rested in *Atman* or Self and is completely controlled from onslaught of passions, is said to be *Yukta* or in harmony (with the Supreme Being).

The *Yogi* thinks of a lamp sheltered from wind which remains steady and does not flicker and imposes that state to himself, i.e. his mind is undisturbed from the turbulences of the sense world.

Such a mind is placid through the practicing of *Yoga* and takes great delight in beholding the Self or *Atman* in self.

When great joy, boundless and beyond the comprehension of the realm of senses is realized by one, he finds himself firmly entrenched in the Supreme Truth.

One who has attained such a state does not care for other (worldly) gains as they are trivial compared to that boundless gift of joy and peace. In that state one does not waver even under the influence of the heaviest grief.

That state devoid of any sorrow and comprised almost entirely of bliss is called *Yoga*. One should toil unto that state with steadfast and determined will.

In order to reach that state one should get rid of all desires and longings (of name, fame, wealth, power etc.), and should control one's mind and senses.

Gradually one should arrive in that state with a steady intellect, with mind drawn inward towards Self and with all thoughts subdued.

## **CONTROLLING OF MIND**

If the fickle mind wants to run (after worldly affairs and objects of senses) one should, with great patience bring it back to the contemplation of Self.

Such a Yogi of tranquil and serene mind attains utmost joy and bliss of the knowledge of *Brahman* and thus gets purged of all impurities.

Bereft of all impurities and engaged in *Yoga*, such one attains infinite bliss through contact with the Infinite *Brahman*.

The *Yogi* thus being perfected beholds the Self in all beings and all beings in the Self or the Supreme Being. Beholding thus, he treats everybody and everything equally, without distinction.

A great unity pervades everybody and everything. We only perceive myriads of forms through an illusion. Underlying the diversities in nature the great unity prevails. All bodies are part of a universal body and all minds are part of a universal mind. One consciousness pervades the entire Universe. That is the principle behind *Advaita Vedanta*. Thus all self are in reality part of the universal Self or *Brahman*. Knowing thus, a *Yogi* does not differentiate or distinguish.

Lord Krishna then proclaimed that one who sees Him, the Self in all beings and all beings in the Self or Him, He, the Supreme Lord of the Universe is never lost to him, nor that devotee, the *Yogi* is ever lost to Him. One who sees the Lord everywhere and in every being is dearer to the Lord because he is always in the vicinity and proximity of the Lord. Such a person can never lose sight of the Lord. The Lord also, as the Self, is always with the devotee, under all circumstances.

One who thus worships Him as the One despite being of myriads of forms in different creatures of the world, and being present everywhere in the world (and not merely in holy places or in heaven), such a *Yogi* comes unto the Lord, irrespective of whatever situation he is in.

*Sri Krishna* further said, “Arjuna, if somebody sees every self as his own self by realizing himself to be the part of a universal Self or *Atman*, under all kinds of circumstances, be it in prosperity or in adversity, such a *Yogi* is great according to Me.”

*Arjuna* then asked, “The *Yoga* about which you’ve spoken thus, of equality, is something which I am unable to comprehend owing to the restlessness of my mind. Mind is by nature fickle and controlling this restless mind, according to me, is as difficult as repressing the mighty wind.”

This is a natural question that comes to everybody. The *Yoga* of meditation is difficult because of our inability to concentrate for a long period. Mind is always restless; it is after one sense object or the other. Thoughts are always springing from nowhere. The years of accumulated impressions or *Sanskaras* are their sources. Mind is like an endless ocean where thoughts are like waves breaking upon the shore of consciousness. Sometimes the waves are relatively quiet, at other times (during troubled times in life) they are turbulent. To convert this turbulent ocean into a placid lake without any disturbance is a feat almost inconceivable to an ordinary soul.

*Sri Krishna* however is prepared for this question. He says, “Oh *Kaunteya*, Undoubtedly mind is difficult to control, but it is possible through years of practice and through detachment (to worldly affairs).”

*Sri Krishna* knows that controlling mind is difficult, but He does not think it to be impossible. Being master of *Yoga* or *Yogeswara* he knows how one can go about controlling a mad elephant like mind. It requires lot of effort, a lot of practice, called *Sadhana*. This is a form of *Yoga* called *Abhyasa Yoga*. However, mere practice will not do, one has to cultivate detachment or dispassion towards worldly affairs if one wants to get a glimpse of the unworldly. Developing dispassion is the most difficult part of *Sadhana* or the effort because one will have to be totally indifferent to any worldly affair including that of his own and his family’s, so that no worldly thought can trouble his mind. *Dhyana* or meditation is a continuous stream of thought on one subject or related subjects. Such stream should never be broken by other thoughts. Just as oil flows out continuously from the bottle, so also the one thought should permeate the consciousness of the *Yogi*.

Lord *Krishna* further said that according to Him, one who is unable to control the mind, of fickle and restless nature, or one who is too much into

the worldly affairs, cannot attain the state of *Yoga*. Only one who has been able to subdue mind and senses, is able to achieve such a state of calmness.

### YOGA'S FRUITION

*Arjuna* then raises another fundamental question. He asks, "One who is striving with devotion to attain the state of *Yoga*, but is unable to control (the mind) and is therefore unable to attain perfection, what state does he attain? By losing both (worldly life and spiritual perfection) is he, the deluded underperformer in the way of realizing the Supreme Being, gets cast down (of merits and worldly successes) like a tattered cloud? Please address this doubt of mine, because nobody save you can relieve me of this lingering doubt."

The answer to this question brings to us a profound assurance from the Lord. "*Partha*, such a person is incapable of getting lost (from spiritual path) here and hereafter. One who has merits never falls into trouble (from spiritual standpoint)."

Such a person, who has once started struggling along spiritual path, will only go upwards, even though there may be ups and downs in that path. A person who has called upon God sincerely will never fall from grace and lose all merits, because he is protected from such a calamity by God Himself. Even if there are minor falls, he will bounce back and steadfastly and devoutly follow his ideal (*ishta devata*).

After he has exhausted his merits by dwelling in high heavens which are attained by only noble souls for a very great period of time, he takes birth amidst religious families who are prosperous and ever joyful with abundance of spiritual wealth.

If we follow the lives of many of the great men following spiritual paths, we'll find that inevitably they were born unto parents who were spiritual themselves, or in pious homes, even though they may have been poor in a worldly sense. The spiritual fervor is then transmitted to their offspring who is able to grow and gain knowledge under their tutelage and thus gradually attain the state of perfection over time.

Sometimes they are born among *Yogis*, which is a rare feat, because such a birth gives them immense opportunity to pursue their unfinished agenda of attaining perfection in the present life. Therefore they begin pursuing the goal of perfection with all their heart, starting from where they had finished earlier. This propensity to seek the perfection or *Siddhi* comes naturally to them and they strive to attain the highest realization.

He is thus drawn towards the path of *Yoga* by the habit cultivated through the practice of previous lives, almost as if unwittingly, until he begins serious striving. Even by being merely an enquirer (about existence of God), his previous practices can catapult him to pass the stage which is attained through knowledge of the *Vedas*.

Narendranath Dutta or Swami Vivekananda was a great example. He was initially an enquirer, when he had asked everybody, including Debendranath Tagore, whether they had seen God. But he was already far advanced in *Yoga*, as was evident when he could receive with ease the great powers which were bestowed upon him and could realize the supreme state at his will. He was a master *Yogi* who was already perfect and had descended for the benefit of the mankind as the great teacher of the age.

However those *Yogis*, who strive with great devotion and dedication and thereby attain purity, over a period of many life times of endeavor, finally reach that great and eternal abode from where there is no return (to the world of mortals).

Lord Krishna concluded thus, "A *Yogi* is thus greater than ascetics, according to Me he is even greater than the men of divine wisdom, he is greater than the persons engaged in great activities and sacrifices. Therefore *Arjuna*, be a *Yogi*."

"However," He continued, "Among *Yogis* I consider those to be the greatest who are sincerely and steadfastly devoted to Me by their heart and soul. The devotee *Yogi* who worships Me is the best among all."

Lord therefore provides all His devotees a great assurance. Good work is never lost. One is bound to reap fruits of it in one life or the other. If one strives sincerely for attaining the supreme knowledge or devotion one is bound to get it, may be in some other life. One who has begun his journey on the path of Self discovery or for seeking the supreme truth is never lost. Such a *Yogi* attains perfection in the end.



## CHAPTER 7: THE YOGA OF KNOWLEDGE & SPECIAL WISDOM

As *Sri Ramakrishna* had said in the Gospel, by knowledge or *Jnana* is meant realizing God, while *vijnana* or special wisdom means living that perpetual bliss by being close to Him, establishing a relationship with Him and ever basking in the glory of that relationship. In his inimitable style he said, some only gets to know that there is something called milk, some have seen milk while some have drunk milk and become nourished thereby. He gave another example - some knows that there is fire in wood, some seen that fire, while a few have actually lit that fire, prepared a nice meal and got satisfied thereby. The one who gets nourished, i.e. enriched by the constant nearness of God is a *vijnani*, of special wisdom.

The Lord *Krishna* said, “By being devoted to Me and by taking Me as refuge, engage yourself in Yoga, for verily, I am everything. Listen to the discourse which will enable you to understand this! I now convey to you that complete special knowledge and wisdom, knowing which there is nothing else to be known (in this world).”

“Out of thousands of men, a few strive to achieve perfection. Of those few, only a handful comes to know me as the true essence of all.”

Lord *Krishna* then narrated His natures, which He classified as apparent nature and real nature. He said that the five elements which include Earth, Water, Fire, Air, and Space, Mind, Intellect and Ego, these are the eightfold divisions of His nature. However these are all inferior characteristics. He then lets *Arjuna* know about His real nature, the nature by which He sustains the entire universe along with the beings therein.

The nature consisting of the eightfold divisions is modifiable, it always undergo decomposition and synthesis. This nature is thus inferior, apparent or material. Anything which undergoes modification cannot be the real nature of God as God is non-decaying, beyond modification. Therefore there is a real nature which is eternal, which is consciousness itself, which does not change with time and space. It is this nature that is responsible for preservation through all ages. Even when one reaches the

end of a cycle and the beginning of a new cycle of creation, preservation and destruction, the unmanifest form of God remains with His essence in sustaining the new cycle.

Lord Krishna now says, “Know this (real nature) to be the birth womb of all creatures. I am the very beginning and the dissolution of life and universe.”

From unmanifest or God all the material beings born and unto God they dissolve. This cycle of creation, preservation and dissolution continues at different scales, from the smallest organism to the entire universe with galaxies and stars.

The Lord proclaimed, “There is nothing in this universe and beyond that is without or apart from Me. I am that eternal thread to which every material being in this Universe is fixed, like gems on a necklace.”

God is everywhere. He is not merely in a high heaven sitting with the rod of chastisement on a golden throne. He is present in everything and everything is present in Him. He, as the Supreme Being or *Brahman* is the vast body of this Universe. He is in the heart of every being. He is the largest as well as the smallest. He is like that spider which spins its web from its body and then resides in it, itself becoming the web. The metaphor of gems on a necklace is one of the most beautiful ones that can be found in any scripture. He is everything and has everything within Him. Everything is interconnected through Him. Without the thread the pearls cannot stay in place. Without Him the Universe loses its meaning because He is the universe. That is the essence of true knowledge. This is also in a sense *Advaita* or Non Duality. *Advaita* means oneness, the grand unity that pervades everything and everybody. Since the Supreme Being is everything and everything is in the Supreme Being, *Advaita* is the guiding principle of the universe, but this knowledge is hard to realize and therefore *Dvaita* or Duality, seeing God as separate from the individual being, is an easier way for an aspirant.

## GOD AND HIS ESSENCE

In the next few verses Lord Krishna further explains His being the essence of the Universe. He is the essential ingredient in water (which is enjoyable by everybody, i.e. the taste of the vital nutrients). He is the shining power of sun and the moon, He is the *pranava* or *Omkara* which is told to be the essence of all Vedas, He is that *anahata* sound which pervades this entire universe, which bears the *Omkara* and which is audible only to the *Yogis* and the *saints*. He is the indwelling spirit or *Purusha* in all human beings.

“I am the sweet and pure fragrance emanating from the earth (which characterizes earth), I am the burning power of fire, the life of all beings and the austerity of ascetics. I am that eternal seed from which all creatures manifest, I am the intellect of the intelligent and wise and I am the bravery of the brave. I am the strength of those strong who are devoid of all desires and attachment. I am the desire for virtue in the virtuous souls,” – said the Lord.

In the tenth chapter of Gita the Lord has summarized the various attributes by which He can be known. Here we have an indication of some attributes. He is the best of everything; He is the real nature behind all, devoid of which those things cannot exist. The five elements are also represented by five sense objects. The earth is characterized by smell while water is characterized by taste. The space is characterized by sound. He is the essence of ascetic quality. He is the One for whom all penances are performed and He is the penance Himself (or the strength of performing it). He is the power or *Shakti* which manifests itself when fire burns. He is the eternal seed of creation. He is the motive force behind all intellect which has been conceived to know Him, the principle behind everything. He is the heroism which constitutes a hero, just as He is the guiding force for *Arjuna*, the hero of *Mahabharata*. He is the strength of righteousness devoid of desire and attachment, not the strength to rule over the weak. He is the epitome of virtue, the desire to do good and act according to the principles of morality for the betterment of the world.

“The three states of *Sattva* or serenity, *Rajas* or activity and passion, *Tamas* or inertia and ignorance, essentially stem from Me. However, I am not established in them. All the objects in this world are composed of these

three *Gunas* or attributes. One who is deluded (by the apparent nature) does not know Me as the Supreme, beyond the attributes. My divine *Maya* which is composed of these three attributes or *Gunas* is difficult to tide over. Only those who worship Me with all sincerity can cross over the vast ocean of *Maya*.”

The apparent nature or *Prakrti* is modifiable, mutable. The real nature is immutable, eternal and beyond the modifications. The three attributes are the major modifiers as they impose their characteristics over that of individuals. They are responsible for ignorance of individual about the real nature of the Supreme Being. *Sattva, Rajas, Tamas* are the thieves which bind and rob individual souls of their ability to comprehend the real nature and thus cross over the vast realm of the divine bewitching force called *Maya*, the *Samsara* or the worldly life and its temptations and tribulations. The devotees of the Lord find it easier to cross over this delusion by Lord’s grace.

“However, the evil doers, the ignorant fools, the worst of all mankind, do not follow Me, out of contempt or hatred. They are devoid of righteousness and virtue and are of demoniacal quality. There are four classes of My devotees, who are virtuous – one who seeks help and divine intervention, i.e. the distressed one, one who seeks profit and material gain, i.e. the wealth and prosperity seeker, one who seeks knowledge and wisdom i.e. spiritual minded, and the one who is wise, the devotee who is established in the knowledge (of *Brahman*). Of them the wise and the ardent devotee is special. He is My most favorite as I am to him, being ever steadfast in his loyalty and devotion to Me, and yearning only for Me. All these four categories of devotees are noble hearted, but the wise (of divine knowledge - *jnani*) is My own self. He is ever established in Me and has Me as his sole refuge. After many a lifetimes, even *jnani* becomes wise enough to make Me as their last refuge and to see “*Vasudeva*”, the supreme soul, as the essence of everything and every being. Such great souls are very rare to come across (as such realization is rare among mortals).”

Lord *Krishna* has so far described what the divine knowledge and wisdom is. He now explains the means of attaining that knowledge. Only a devotee, who is also wise in divine knowledge, a *jnani*, can cross over the realm of

Maya through God's grace. Who disregard God, those who are sinful, and those who possess *Asuri* or the demoniac qualities, do not receive that grace and remain perpetually in ignorance till they take refuge in God. The *Daivi* or the divine and the *Asuri* or the demoniac qualities are discussed in detail in chapter 16.

The classification of the devotee is a measure of progress that they have made on the spiritual path, along with their predisposition or nature. A person who is ignorant of the true nature of the Supreme Being, and yet, is good enough to look unto Him as the wish fulfiller, would naturally ask for help when in distress. He is weak, and he is unable to improve his condition all by himself. Desirous of material gains like riches, name, fame, he longs for the grace of God to improve his condition. A person seeking knowledge is a step ahead as he is not hankering for material prosperity but is desirous of the bliss and joy from spiritual advancement. But the best is the *jnani* who longs only for God and nothing else. He is already established in the knowledge and realization of God and the worldly things do not matter to him anymore. Such persons are God's very own, because they consider Him as their sole refuge. When Supreme Knowledge is bestowed upon them after striving for many births, they are able to see God in every being. *Sri Krishna* had already mentioned that only a handful among millions is illuminated with such special knowledge about the real nature. According to *Sri Ramakrishna* this is the stage at which a *jnani* becomes a *vijnani*, specially illuminated. A *jnani* knows that there is God, but a *vijnani* enjoys God as a special privilege. Some have heard about milk (ignorant) but have not seen it, some have seen it (*jnani*) but not tasted it, and some have drunk milk to their heart's content and become nourished (*vijnani*). Only after striving for many births a *jnani* may become a *vijnani*. The Lord and His devotees are not truly different. They are part of His essence.

### ATTAINING HIS ESSENCE

The Lord now describes them who are desirous of boons and material gains, the class of devotees who have not yet been able to tear asunder the veil of *Maya*, being ignorant of the True nature of God. Deprived and deluded by desires they worship different gods and goddesses, according to their own nature and disposition. Whatever forms that these devotees



wish to worship with devotion, the Lord Himself grants that steadfast devotion. With that devotion these devotees worship these gods for the fulfillment of their desires and obtain these desires through their ardent and sincere worship, by the grace of the Supreme Lord who is the ultimate recipient of all worships and who grants all fulfillments.

In another chapter Sri Krishna has declared that verily He is the enjoyer as well as the Lord of all sacrifices. Therefore all worships, even though offered to the various divine forms, are ultimately directed towards the Supreme Being. It is the Supreme Being, who cultivates this devotion or *Sraddha* amongst the devotees for various forms, according to their tastes and propensities or nature. He also grants the boons desiring which the worships are performed. However, these worships are performed for the fulfillment of desire and hence ignorance, which is the root cause of all evils, is not dispelled. Fulfillment of worldly desires brings in more miseries in its wake.

*Sri Krishna* said, "The fruits of such boons are, however, temporary. The one, who worships the gods, goes to those gods, while those who worship Me, the Supreme Being, come unto Me."

Fulfillment of desire does not bring in any lasting effect. Wealth, prosperity, name, fame, fortune and other earthly goods do not last. They may at best survive the lifetime of the receiver of the boon. Any desire brings in miseries. Wealth brings anxiety and worry over its maintenance; fame and fortune bring anxiety of losing honor, prosperity breeds pride and arrogance. All these worries give way to greed, the desire to get more and more, and in the end it becomes a self annihilating tool. Man forfeits his eternal life for the desire of few worldly crumbs. Those who worship individual *devas* can at best attain the state of the *devas* if they follow a virtuous life and make good of their wealth, i.e. they can ascend to heaven. But *Gita* points out, esp. in the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Chapters, that even the highest heaven is transitory, transient. Unless a man sincerely strives for liberation from the cycle of birth and death, he will have to fall from heaven after the exhaustion of his merits and will have to reborn in the world to reap the fruits of his *karma*. Nobody is immune to this universal law. Only the most sincere devotees of the Lord, who by the grace of the Supreme Being have

been able to dispel the cloud of ignorance, whose only refuge is the Lord and who has no earthly desire, can attain the Supreme Being and therefore get *Moksha* or final liberation.

In the next few verses the Lord speaks more about His real nature, which is not perceived by ordinary souls. He says, "Fools, deluded, and being ignorant of my eternal transcendental Supreme state, regard Me as an ordinary mortal appearing from the unmanifest nature like all other mortals. I do not reveal My true Self as the world is veiled by Maya. This deluded world does not know My true nature, the unborn and immutable Supreme Being. I know the past, present and future of this universe, but nobody knows Me, oh Arjuna!"

Only the pure hearted devotees can know the true nature of the God, and that too by His grace. When an *Avatar* or incarnation comes down to the world for restoring the harmony and for playing with His devotees, ordinary people are unable to fathom His greatness because of the thick veil of *Maya* engulfing the world. They therefore fail to comprehend that an *Avatar* is the pure Atman, unborn and undying, immutable and eternal, unlike any other living being. Ordinary beings take birth from the nature. From their unmanifest state, they become manifest and then fades into the unmanifest again in the end. The Lord knows the past, present and future of all living beings because the world is His playground and He is devising the scripts for the life stories of all and sundry.

In another sense an *Avatar* is a perfect soul, who is already established in knowledge, and who is able to bring in salvation for many others. But outwardly He is like any other human being and therefore unless He manifests His specialties, nobody is able to grasp Him. In other words, He does not reveal Himself to all and sundry and only to a select few who would be able to emulate His life and would become beacons for others.

In the last few verses, Sri Krishna identifies them who come to know of the true nature of the Supreme Being and how that nature can be known.

He said, "Being driven and deluded by the pairs of opposites like desire and aversion, all living beings remain ignorant (of My true nature). Those, whose sins have been destroyed by the virtuous deeds, can get rid of the delusion of the pairs of opposites and worship Me steadfastly. Those who



strive for taking me as the sole refuge to liberate themselves from the miseries of decay and death, they come to attain the *Brahman*, the supreme reality and thus gain the complete knowledge and also the mastery of all actions. Those who thus know Me with the *Adhibhuta*, *Adhidaiva* and the *Adhiyajna*, they, being steadfastly united with Me, come to know Me even during the moments of their departure (from the mortal lives)."

All living beings are driven by the pairs of opposites which are a potent force in the hand of *Maya*, the illusive divine force. Such pairs are good and evil, attachment and aversion, love and hatred, hot and cold, pleasure and pain, sins and virtues, light (knowledge) and darkness (ignorance) etc. These pairs of opposites bind an individual to the world and deny him the knowledge of God. One who has been able to gain inner purity can rise above the tidings of these qualities of nature. Such inner purity can be obtained by a sincere devotee who cares for only God and no earthly object. His only desire is to get liberated and he attains that supreme state by which decay and death cannot affect him as he has surrendered himself completely to the Lord. Miseries of old age and fear of death cannot affect those who have transcended the dualities. They are the best of devotees, and they are wise with the knowledge of that *Brahman*. Therefore they know the entire science of knowledge called *Adhyatma*. They have accomplished the goal of all work, i.e. realization of God, and therefore have also gained complete mastery over all forms of work.

They thus know the true nature of the God by various ways – *Adhibhuta*, *Adhidaiva* and *Adhiyajna*, the meanings of which will be clarified in the next chapter. They are united in the Lord even at the time of their death and are liberated from the cycles of life and death by knowing and realizing Him, the ultimate object of all knowledge.

## CHAPTER 8: THE YOGA OF IMPERISHABLE BRAHMAN

*Arjuna* now rightly asked the following questions which also come to our mind at the end of the seventh chapter - “Oh *Purushottama*! Tell me what is that *Brahman*? What is that science of Knowledge or *Adhyatma*? What is Action in the context that you described? What is *Adhibhuta* and pray what is *Adhidaiva*? What is *Adhiyajna* in this body? At the time of death how would one know you?”

The Lord says in response, “*Brahman* is immutable and beyond (the limits of intellect), the Supreme Being, the study of the *Brahman* or *Atman* (*Swa-bhava* – own *bhava* or nature) is called *Adhyatma* (*Adhi Atman*) or spiritual knowledge. *Karma* is the grand sacrifice by which all beings and their nature come into existence. *Adhibhuta* is manifested universe with all beings, which is mutable and modifiable; the *Adhidaiva* is the *Purusha* or the acting Self who presides over mind, intelligence and sense organs. *Adhiyajna* is Me, the Supreme Being who presides over all sacrifices, who is also the indweller in the body (*Atman* or the Self), the eternal witness. “

This knowledge is one of the most esoteric in *Gita* and there are various interpretations for the definitions which the Lord has provided. However there is a pattern in these explanations. There are three schools of *Vedantic* thoughts. *Dvaita* or dualism which is followed by most major religions of the world, which differentiates between individual souls and a Supreme Being who is the creator, preserver and destructor, who presides over all and looks after all, to whom one can pray and who incarnates for the devotees. *Visistadvaita* or qualified monism postulates that the Supreme Being divides itself into many individual souls and all these individual souls are contained in that Supreme consciousness. So according to this school of thought the individual beings are parts, not entirely separate from the Supreme Being. The grandest of them is however *Advaita*, or monism which postulates that this division of the Supreme Being into individuals is merely an illusion. There is a grand unity which pervades all beings, i.e. all are Supreme Being. The division is the work of the illusive force called *Maya* which creates myriads of names and forms and the visible and the perceived Universe. All schools accept that *Brahman* is one

and immutable. However while *Dvaita* and *Visistadvaita* distinguishes between the individual souls and the *Brahman*, *Advaita* declares them to be one and the same thing once *Maya* has been transcended. So these schools are actually steps of spiritual knowledge through which one can obtain the knowledge of the grand unity pervading all, thus reaching the culmination called *Advaita*. *Adhyatma* is that process of acquiring knowledge, whereby we get to know the real nature of the *Brahman* and the real nature of *Atman*. *Karma* is a means of obtaining knowledge as *Karma* is a result of desire, desire to enjoy the fruits of *Karma* brings sufferings in its wake, and sufferings makes the mind purer, thereby making it a better receptacle to assimilate the knowledge of the absolute and its real nature – *Adhyatma*. *Adhyatma* leads to illumination whereby one understands the *Adhibhuta*, the impermanence of the world of names and forms. The *Dvaita*, which is based on Names and Forms thus merges into *Visistadvaita*, as for the first time the aspirant gets to taste the true nature of divine, and begins to consider that the he, the individual soul, is not entirely separate from his beloved, the Lord, but is a part of the Him. From *Adhibhuta* thus one gets to know the *Adhidaiva*, the presiding deity of all functions, the active *Purusha*, who is really the creative or motive power of the Universe. But still in the *Visistadvaita* sense, this creative or presiding power is different from the individuals, although He, in the Supreme aspect creates and presides over each of them. It is only by knowing *Adhiyajna*, the Supreme Being or the Self who is the Lord of all sacrifices, all knowledge and action, transience and intransience, mutable and immutable, and by understanding the unity of the individual soul with the Supreme, cosmic soul, that one gains the ultimate knowledge of *Advaita*. Realizing this unity, nothing else remains to be known – that the Supreme Being and the Self are one and the same. Also this realization is the convergence of all *Yogas* or paths – of action, of renunciation, of devotion and of knowledge.

#### **PATH TO MOKSHA OR FINAL EMANCIPATION - THE IMPERISHABLE BRAHMAN**

In the previous chapter the Lord proclaims that one who takes refuge in Him to tide over the vicissitudes of old age and death, comes to know about the immutable *Brahman*, the whole of the science of knowledge or *Adhyatma* and the *Karma* or Action in its entirety. One who knows Him as the *Adhibhuta*, *Adhidaiva*, *Adhiyajna*, also realizes Him at the time of death.

Here He further explains the terms for the benefit of those who wish to gain the Supreme Knowledge.

When the end draws near, if one is able to steady his mind and remember Him at the last moment, he realizes the supreme truth and becomes merged in God. Whatever one thinks at the last moment, one attains that state. In this respect the often quoted story is that of king *Bharata*, who was known as *Jadabharata* in a later life, who had died thinking of a deer whom he loved. He therefore got the body of a deer in his next life. However one is never able to remember God at the last moment, unless one tries to cultivate that habit throughout his life. A worldly person will only remember worldly matters however hard he tries in the end to merge his mind into spiritual bliss. A person who loves another will remember that other person. A person, who loves the Supreme Being, will think of the Supreme and his mind will merge with the Supreme.

“Therefore”, says the Lord, “at all times, remember Me and fight. Because verily I tell you that one who is ever immersed in My thoughts will get Me in the end.”

Fight signifies our trials and tribulations in daily life. We'll have to bear the burden, the heavy cross, and constant thinking of the Supreme Being helps in easing that burden because it gives us a sense of purpose, a direction, a divine light at the end of the long and dark tunnel of life.

“Oh Partha !Using constant practice as the means, without letting the mind to drift, one can realize the divine being, by constantly meditating on Him. One who knows Him comes to understand that He is a knower of everything, is very ancient, He reigns over everything, smaller than a minutest atom. He is the preserver of everything; His form is beyond description and comprehension. He is that great source of light which shines and dispels ignorance and which is beyond all darkness (of the heart).”

This is the description even contained in *Upanishads* – “I have known that great being whose splendor is great and who is beyond all darkness. By knowing Him you too will attain immortality, there is no other way.”

The eternal *Brahman* is thus beyond description. The only simile is like that of a great source of enlightenment (just as the sun is to the material world) who is beyond the darkness and beyond ignorance, as by knowing Him all ignorance is dispelled. He is tiniest as He cannot be perceived by the ordinary senses. Only the purified senses of a *Yogi*, refined or developed through many years of devotion or ascetic practices, are able to perceive Him, realize Him.

The Lord continues, “At the time of death, with a concentrated mind, with devotion and communion through *Yoga*, by concentrating the vital life force or *Prana* at a point (i.e. focusing with a determined effort at some places significant for the Yogis), one can attain the Supreme, Divine Being. He is the one whom the knower of *Veda* calls as imperishable or *Akshara*, into whom the ascetics, after having renounced all desires and attachments enter, desiring whose attainment the *Brahmacharins* or celibates and pure souls perform all actions. I’ll tell you how to attain Him. By restraining all outlets of the body (i.e. all sense organs), by even focusing the mind in the heart, by gathering and controlling the vital life force, one can attain the *Yoga* state.”

This is a complicated *Yoga* procedure and is usually referred to as *Raja Yoga*. This is described in detail in the *Yoga Sutra* of *Patanjali* and *Gita* provides a summary of the various steps. The Lord describes how to attain the divine using this particular form of *Yoga* and in the process He describes the special appeal of the Supreme Being to all who wants to attain Him. The eightfold paths or the *Ashtanga Yoga* consists of *Yama* – Non violence, Truth, Non Stealing, Celibacy & non acceptance of gifts (all these by body, mind and speech), *Niyama* – purity, contentment, asceticism, scriptural studies & worship of God, *Asana* – the posture, *Pranayama* – the regulation of the vital force or *Prana*, *Pratyahara* – detaching the mind and senses from external objects, *Dharana* – have a fixed idea, *Dhyana* – meditation or constant reflection on that fixed idea, *Samadhi* – the highest state where the ego is dissolved and the mind submerges in Supreme.

The concentration or constant reflection encompasses *Pratyahara*, *Dharana* and *Dhyana*, holding of *Prana* is *Pranayama*, and attainment of Supreme is *Samadhi*. The ascetics, *Brahmacharins* and knower of *Veda* are all in various



stages of the *Yama* and *Niyama* –celibacy, scriptural studies, asceticism, worship etc. The goal of all is the Supreme Being, whose attainment will result in liberation from the cycle of life and death.

The Lord continues, “By constantly reciting that one word which depicts *Brahman*, the *Om*, and at the same time remembering Me, one who gives up the body, gets the supreme state, i.e. *Moksha* or liberation. The *Yogi* who with undivided attention worships me (mentally, through constant remembrance), I am easily available to that great person who is ever united with Me. One who attains Me, do not suffer from the pangs of rebirth. That person is ever free from cycles of life and death which are full of miseries and are impermanent. From the realm of *Brahma* (the creative force or the earliest deity) to the residents of this earth, everybody returns to continue on the cycles of life and death. However one who attains Me, is free from the shackles of rebirth.”

The world of material objects is ephemeral, transient. It is full of miseries because all sensory enjoyments bring sufferings in their wake. In the world one has to suffer from the consequences of the *Karma* or the actions. One has to grow old, suffer from diseases, death and destruction, losses and sorrows. Every pleasure is short lived, pain comprises of the major part of one’s life. Yet, one is never able to detach the mind from the worldly pleasures and objects of senses. The great force which propels everybody to attach the mind to the objects of senses instead of directing it to the thoughts about the Supreme Being is called *Maya*. *Gita* introduced us to this great illusory force which binds people by bewitching them, in the previous chapter. Now the Lord explains the consequences of such a bond. *Maya* or *Prakrti*, the nature and the universe, causes all living beings to get attached to *Samsara* or the world and therefore come back again and again to reap the fruits of their actions. Only those great souls of tranquil minds, who have been able to tear asunder the veil of *Maya* through the renunciation of worldly pleasures, will, by the grace of the Supreme Being, attain Him and thereby get liberated from the cycles of rebirth. Their actions no longer bear fruit as they are burnt out by the power of the supreme knowledge. For them the worldly thoughts and pleasures are replaced with the constant thoughts of God and all actions performed are directed towards realization of the Supreme Being.

## THE TWO PATHS - A COMPARISON

The Lord provides here an idea of the scale of time for cycles of creation. A thousand *Yugas* make up one day of *Brahma*, the creative force and another thousand *Yugas* make up His night. These thousand *Yugas* comprise of one *Kalpa*. Each cycle of *Yugas* comprise of four *Yugas*, 71 such cycles comprise of a *Manvantar* or period of a great being (ruler of the world) called *Manu*, 14 *Manvantars* make up one *Kalpa*.

Onset of the day of *Brahma* is the beginning of creation. From the unmanifest, all things manifest or evolve or get projected at the beginning of the day. Unmanifest is the first stage of creation and the last stage of dissolution. It is a stage in which nothing is manifest, i.e., no names and forms exist. It is a state of nature where there is no material object, not even thoughts, speeches or actions, nor is there a mind, nor consciousness. When the night sets in, again all beings are involved or dissolved into the unmanifest and exist as part of the unmanifest without names and forms, in a perpetual void, as subtlest of the essence. This is also called the causal state and this state has been imagined in *Puranas* as a great causal ocean.

All living beings and their actions are there in the seed form in the unmanifest. When a new creation starts, i.e. at the beginning of *Brahma's* day, all created beings are projected out of the seed, just as a large tree shoots up from a tiny seed. At the end of the *Brahma's* day, the beings who are not liberated, go back to the seed form in the unmanifest, to be born again at the time of creation.

However, beyond this unmanifest, which is also a state of the *Prakrti* or Nature, there exists a greater unmanifest state which is eternal and ever Supreme. This state is beyond all modifications and remains unchanged even when the entire Universe dissolves. This is eternal, imperishable and everlasting, without any beginning or end.

The Lord says, "The state which is thus referred to variously as Unmanifest, Imperishable etc. is the greatest refuge of all. It is that state, by attaining which one never returns to the world. This is My great abode.



That Supreme Being, in whom resides this entire Universe and who covers the entire Universe, is attainable only through great devotion.

The imperishable and eternal state is the Supreme Being. His abode is the dissolution of individual mind and ego in Him. Every individual possesses a gross body, a subtle body consisting of mind, intellect, consciousness and ego, and an unmanifest (seed) causal body (the form in which it exists in the beginning of creation and which is therefore called causal). Beyond these bodies or covering is the *Atman* in its entire splendor. Once all these coverings are removed, i.e. even the causal body or the seed is destroyed, the *Atman* with all its glory is revealed. With the dawn of this knowledge, there is no further rebirth as all actions and their effects are destroyed along with the seed or causal body.

"I'll now tell you about the time periods during which the *Yogis* either break free of the cycle (of life and death) or returns (in the form of a rebirth). A *Yogi* leaving the world during the periods of *Agni* or Fire, *Jyoti* or divine light, the period of the *Ahan* or the day, the period of the whiteness or *Shukla*, the six months, known as *Uttarayana* (the period during which the sun embarks on a Northward journey, from January to June, summer solstice), attains the *Brahman*. On the other hand, a *Yogi*, leaving the worldly abode during the periods of *Dhuma* or smoke, *Ratri* or night, *Krishna* or darkness, the six months of *Dakshinayan* (when the sun embarks on a southward journey, from July to December, winter solstice), attains the light of the *Chandramas* and therefore returns (to the world). The bright and dark are the two paths according to eternal knowledge, while one leads to liberation, the other binds one to the cycle of the life and death."

The Supreme Being is beyond the Unmanifest, as the unmanifest or the first stage of creation as well as the creative force called *Brahma* resides in Him only. Only His abode, i.e. the state of enlightenment, can provide liberation from the ephemeral and transient state of being, the worldly life.

The different stages or periods explained by the Lord here are cryptic and probably refer to different phases through which a soul progresses in its afterlife. Suffice to say that all attributes of light and brightness like fire,

light, whiteness, the summer solstice, leads to liberation. These phases of brightness are symbolic of the knowledge, which illuminates one with the Supreme Realization. The smoke, the darkness, the night, and the winter, are all symbols of the darkness which hides the truth. Only the truth (realization of God) liberates. As long as the light of knowledge is not dawned, the individual is in darkness and therefore will have to return to reap the fruits of action and to gain knowledge again. This world is like a great University from where one cannot pass out unless one completes the education and attains perfection.

Thus there are two ways, the way of brightness and the way of darkness, the former liberates while the latter binds. These two paths also symbolize the path of *pravrtti* or enjoyments (darkness) and the path of *nivrtti* or renunciation (brightness). The former, a life of sensory pleasures and enjoyment seeking, is the course of ordinary mortals who, as a result get ensnared to the tethers of the world and therefore come back again and again to the world. The latter, a life of selflessness and purity, transforms souls and destroys all sins to make them fit receptacle for realization of God.

*Sri Krishna* says, “Even by knowing these two paths, the *Yogis* never get deluded as they follow one path or the other. Therefore at all times, be *Yogi*, Oh *Arjuna*. The virtues which one begets through reciting or studying of *Vedas*, ascetic practices, sacrifices, gifts and charities, are all transcended by *Yogis* who learns these (means of differentiating between real and unreal, the path which liberates and the path which binds) and therefore such virtuous souls attain great ends.”

The *Yogis*, by knowing what is best for them (the path of liberation) shun worldly pleasures and engage themselves in pursuit of that Supreme knowledge which ultimately liberates them. That life of single minded devotion and pursuit of Supreme Knowledge is better than the virtuous paths of mere scriptural studies, charities and sacrifices, aspiring after pleasures in this world and after, as such desires merely bind one to the cycle of life.

## CHAPTER 9: THE YOGA OF GREAT KNOWLEDGE AND GREAT SECRETS

*Sri Krishna* now tells *Arjuna*, “Now I impart to you here the most mysterious knowledge. This special knowledge will help you in getting liberated from the vicissitudes of life. This is also called king of all knowledge because of its inherent grandness. Also this is the most regal of all mysteries in the world. This knowledge is pure and holy and most auspicious. This knowledge, which is blissful and eternal, can be realized or directly perceived.

Those who are not true to this knowledge and doctrine (that is, are either unaware of the knowledge or do not take heed of it out of ignorance), do not get Me and have to return to this world full of woes time and again (i.e. they cannot get liberation).

I am the one who pervades this Universe in the form of Unmanifest. All beings are in Me, however I am not in them. Nor even all beings are truly in Me, just see the power of My *yoga*. I am the preserver of all beings, and yet not in them. I am the solace and refuge of all beings. Just as the air, residing in eternal space and yet unmingled with it, is great and ever free to flow anywhere, so also all beings are in Me.”

The great knowledge and great secret imparts a sense of the true nature of the one who has been regarded as Imperishable and Unmanifest in the previous chapter and who has been merely introduced in Chapter 7 as special knowledge. The Lord asserts that all this knowledge is matter of realization. This knowledge is therefore verifiable by those who are sincere and devoted to know the Lord truly, without any hypocrisy. Unless one knows the Supreme Being truly and effectively one is not free from the bonds of the world.

The Unmanifest encompasses this entire Universe. He is not separate from the Universe and yet, He asserts, that He is separate from it as He is not into it. Just as a spider casts its net from its womb and then rests on it, He projects this Universe and stays on it, at the same time being separate from His creation. He is His Universe as He is both the material and

efficient cause and He provides the material from within Himself, but He is never involved. The Universe changes, modifies, goes through cycles of creation and destruction, but He is unsullied and therefore He cannot be in the Universe. At the same time the Universe and its beings cannot exist without Him. This is His *Yoga*, the greatest and grandest of all powers, to be, become and yet remain detached from everything.

*Advaita Vedanta* teaches us that from the grand unity all differentiation has come up in the form of the manifest world of names and forms. However this differentiation is only an illusion, just as the reflection of the sun in ten different containers of water. Just as air moves about freely quite unaware of the surrounding space which contains it, so also the living beings go on with their worldly life, unconcerned about the Supreme Being's presence everywhere. He is in essence, everything that the Universe constitutes of and He is not limited to the manifested Universe.

### **ACT OF GOD**

Sri Krishna says, "All living beings will go back to the unmanifest nature at the end of a *Kalpa*, and at the beginning of the *Kalpa*, I create them once more. Thus subjugating the nature I create and recreate. All beings are thus helpless victims of the nature."

The threefold natures of *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas* or qualities of tranquility, passion and ignorance, have already been discussed. These natures decide the personality and actions of all living beings. Every living being undergoes alternate cycles of creation and destruction or birth and death till they break away from the cycle of rebirth. At the end of a *Kalpa* or thousand *Yugas*, everything is involved in the unmanifest, from where they evolve again at the beginning of a new *Kalpa*, to reap the fruits of their actions. The actions are decided by their nature. Thus every being is as if a helpless victim in the hand of the nature. The Lord as the master of the nature uses her to procreate. All other beings are followers of their nature and hence the divine mother *Prakrti*. It is as if they are helplessly subservient to the nature, both internal and external, as they are subjected to the cycles of birth, old age, disease, death.

It is the nature which is supposed to contain the mysterious power called *Maya* that binds with the veil of ignorance. Only the Supreme Being is beyond *Maya*. To tear the veil, one needs the weapon of Supreme Knowledge or a glimpse of the Truth. Ignorance will not go unless one is able to transcend the threefold nature and the world.

But creation and destruction are actions. If the Lord acts, isn't He also subject to the laws of action or *Karma*?

*Sri Krishna* answers this, "Even though I, perform these work (of creation, preservation and destruction), these works do not bind Me, for I am not attached to them. I am indifferent to the consequences of My actions."

This is a very strange knowledge and the Lord here becomes the message of *Gita* personified. So far we have heard from Him about the principle of action – as sacrifice of selfish desires, and non attachment to the fruits. He proclaims here, as He does in the third and fourth Chapters that He performs all actions with complete detachment. In the fifth Chapter He also provides a differentiation between action and inaction. As Supreme Being, all actions originate from Him. However He can remain unattached to the actions because He does not need any fruit. Seen in another way, He or the Supreme Being, the *Brahman*, is passive, inert. He is present everywhere and everything is He, but He is not into anything because of this passiveness, inertness, that is why He is indifferent. It is the manifested power or *Shakti* which is involved in the tasks of creation, preservation and destruction. However these two states, inertness and active state, are as different from each other as the ocean and its waves, as the fire and its burning power, as the light and its brightness, i.e., there is no difference, only two states of perception. We can perceive fire by its heat, as long as we do not feel the heat or do not see the bright light of the flame we cannot realize that the fire is burning, even though there is a fire. So also as long as we do not see any manifestation of the power of God or *Shakti*, we do not realize the existence of the Supreme Being. Such manifestations therefore come down from time to time and are called incarnations or *avatars*. These beings primarily come down (from a lofty plane of consciousness to an ordinary plane) through compassion for the world and to dispel the ignorance of the masses, to help them get a glimpse of the Truth and thus

free themselves from the bondage. In another version, they come to the rescue of their devotees, for the restoration of virtue and truthfulness, to check the decadence and degradation in human civilization in terms of arrogance, pride, lust and greed. However since these incarnations or unique manifestations work without any selfish motives or desires, purely out of compassion, they are not subjected to the ordinary laws of *Karma* that are binding.

### THE INCARNATING PRINCIPLE

The Lord continues, “Under my supervision, the mother nature gives birth of all living and non living entities. This is the reason why the universe continues its cycles (of creation, preservation and destruction). The deluded men, not knowing Me in the guise of a human being, are not cognizant of My highest nature (of eternal and immutable), or Me as the Supreme Godhead of all beings.”

The Supreme Being is the master of the nature or her forces, the all encompassing, all pervading *Shakti* or the divine power which gives birth to everything. In a sense She is the mother of the Universe. In another sense she is not different from the Supreme Being. In *Sankhya* philosophy, they are represented as *Purusha* and *Prakrti*. These concepts are explained in detail in Chapter thirteen. In Chapter seven the Lord even speaks about His inferior and superior natures. The superior nature or *Para Prakrti* is the mother of the Universe, and She is no different from the Supreme Being just as the burning power of fire is no different from the fire itself. In another sense She is the driving force of the Universe and even the Supreme Being cannot act unless united with that power. That is the significance of the image of mother *Kali* standing on the body of the Lord *Shiva* – the union of the power or *Shakti* with *Brahman* or the Supreme Being who is inactive. However the *Prakrti* is subservient to the will of the Supreme Being during any form of activity like creation. So under the supervision of the cosmic will the cosmic force of creation continues.

Now when the same cosmic power incarnates or its power manifests in the world, very few can truly understand that power. Those who do are liberated. The special manifestation comes for a special purpose, and only fortunate few can understand that purpose at the time of the advent,



though as time goes on the purpose and the deeds become clearer and clearer and serve as a great spiritual solace to millions in days to come. Greater a manifestation, greater, longer and more pervasive is the impact. However, very few can truly understand the manifestation. The incarnation has to suffer many troubles in the hands of the mortals. Being all the time aware of His true nature, He, out of love and compassion, withstands them all and carries on with His duty in a completely detached manner. He is a universal teacher, whose teachings are relevant not for a few years or few centuries, but which provide succor for thousands of years to many a thirsty souls.

“Those who have hopes of inferior (worldly) nature, those who work in vain (without any higher purpose, simply for the sake of name, fame, fortune and various other worldly gains), those who are devoid of knowledge (of God), the deluded ones, of monstrous and demoniac nature, do not know Me. However those great souls of divine nature, worship Me with concentrated mind, knowing Me to be the most Ancient and Immutable. They always sing My praise, are determined to endeavor (for attaining Me), bow down to Me with devotion out of reverence and thus remain ever united with Me. Others worship Me through the *jnanayajna*, sacrifice of knowledge, knowing me to be the One getting divided into these myriad forms, or as the different names and forms themselves pervading the entire universe.”

Self conceited, vain, possessed of pride, jealousy, arrogance and other demoniac qualities, cannot get a glimpse of the Supreme Manifestation who is revealed to only those of pure minds. His devotees, who constantly think of Him, consider Him as their only refuge, who worship Him in various ways, are the fortunate ones to know Him by His grace. Those who are dedicated to the path of knowledge, also get that ineffable bliss, by realizing Him as present in all beings and He being present in everything and everywhere, as different names and forms.

## VARIOUS MANIFESTATIONS

“I am the sacrifice and the performer of the sacrifice, I am *Swadha*, the respectful offering to the ancestors, I am the medicinal herbs, I am the magical chants or *mantras*, I am the clarified butter, I am the sacrificial fire,



I am the oblation. I am the father of the universe, the mother, the preserver, the grandfather. I am the knowledge to be gained, I am the pure *Omkara*, I am the three Vedas – *Rik*, *Sama* & *Yajur*. I am the destiny of all beings, protector and sustainer, the Lord, the witness, the abode, the refuge, the dearest, the places of origin and dissolution, the destruction, the eternal seed. I am the One who scorches, I am the One who alleviates suffering like rainfall after a hot dry summer, I procreate and take back (lives), I am the immortality and I am death, I am both existence and non existence, Oh Arjuna!”

In Chapter eight the Lord declared Himself to be the *Adhiyajna*. Now He proclaims that He is everything that a sacrifice comprises of. The same concept was discussed in Chapter four when a sacrifice and its components were described to be consisting of nothing but *Brahman*, the eternal being. He is the one to whom the sacrifice is directed to, He is the end result, He is the material offered as oblation, He is the means (fire, chants, libation) of performing the sacrifice. He is the father, mother and grandfather of the universe because He created all beings and he protects them. He is the only One to be known and thus the ultimate knowledge, the Supreme Truth. He is the noblest sound in the form of the *Omkara* resonating this Universe and the sound form of the Supreme Being. He is the revelation in the form of the Veda. He is the all in all. He is the all merciful Lord who is also the sole refuge and the sustainer. He is also the inactive witness, present as *Atman* in every being. He is the One in whom rests the entire Universe and He is the supreme abode. He is the One whom all the devotees look up as the protector, bestower of boons. He is the nearest relation to everybody, nobody is dearer than Him. He not only creates (from unmanifest) but He also destroys and takes back all beings into the unmanifest, in the twin processes of involution & evolution. He is the eternal seed from which originates this entire Universe.

He is the seasons. He is present in the form of hot summer and He is the One who brings much joy in the form of rain. In other words He is the cause of suffering and He is the one who alleviates the sufferings and miseries. He is death and He is immortality, He is the existence and He is also the non existence.

The persons who engage themselves in rites and rituals as prescribed in the *Vedas*, aspiring after heaven, worship Him through the sacrifices and the oblation of *Soma* juice. They get their desires fulfilled and enjoy the bounties and luxuries in heaven. At the end of the enjoyment period, when their merits have exhausted, they return to the earth assuming new bodies to reap the fruits of their *Karma*. Thus by following the rites in the three *Vedas* they keep on transmigrating (from heaven to earth) led by a life of enjoyment and fulfillment of material desires. They do not get the Supreme Lord and the associated bliss, nor are they liberated.

### RELATION WITH DEVOTEES

*Sri Krishna* said, "Those devotees, who, however, fix their mind upon Me and worship Me without any other material desire or want, for these, ever united souls, I Myself bear their burden of acquiring objects for their livelihood and protecting these objects."

This is one of the most important assurances given by the Lord to His devotees. One who is able to transcend all material desires and rise to that supreme state where one cannot think of anything other than the Supreme Being, the Supreme Being Himself provides all sustenance. These devotees make absolutely no effort in this regard. This is explained beautifully by *Sri Ramakrishna* - when a minor assumes the charge of an estate, a special trust takes care of the minor and his estate. The minor, who is incapable of acting, does not have to do any administrative task. Similarly for a devotee who is incapable of taking care of the material needs because of his absorption in God, God Himself makes all arrangements like food and family maintenance. There are many instances in the lives of saints and sages for this.

"*Kaunteya*, Even those devotees who worship other gods or demigods with sincerity and devotion, they also worship Me only, albeit in an improper way. I am the Lord of all sacrifices and also enjoyer of the fruits thereof. These devotees (of other lesser gods) do not know Me properly and hence degrade themselves."

This is another great statement pertaining to Universal tolerance, harmony and unity. All gods and demi-gods like *Indra*, *Agni*, *Varuna*, *Mitra*, are in effect inferior to the Supreme Being. On the other hand, the Lord of the Universe Himself is present in the form of these demigods and goddesses. The same holds good when the Lord is worshipped not as *Hari* or *Narayana* or by some other name belonging to some other culture or country. The worship, in effect, is reaching the Lord because He is the master of all sacrifices. Therefore all sacrifices and their fruits will reach Him. As proclaimed in the chapter 7, the devotees worshipping the lesser gods and goddesses get their desires fulfilled by the Supreme Being Himself. However these devotees, in their ignorance do not know Him and therefore are satisfied by the fulfillment of the material desires. The satisfaction of material desires is a very low outcome as the highest state the devotees can reach by worshipping the Supreme Being is liberation or freedom from the bondage or transmigration for reaping the fruits of *Karma*. However, by invoking the various gods for material progress and prosperity, they merely degrade themselves as they fail to obtain the supreme grace of liberation and the associated bliss. The highest form of devotion is *Ahaituki Bhakti* or love for the sake of love, not the devotion for granting any material desire. As the Lord said in Chapter 7, the devotees are of various classes like the one who seeks help and divine intervention, one who seeks profit and material gain, one who seeks knowledge and wisdom i.e. spiritual minded, and the one who is wise. Among them the most favourite to the Lord is the one who is Wise. This is because the wise or *jnani* never possesses any selfish desire.

“The ones, who worship the gods, go to the gods, those who worship the *Pitrs* or ancestors, go to them, those who worship the lower forces of nature like spirits, go to them as well. In the same way, those who worship Me, come to Me. Leaves, flowers, fruits, water, whatever My devotee offers Me with sincere devotion, I partake such honest offerings. Therefore Oh *Kaunteya*, whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever sacrifices you perform and whatever you give as gift unto others, whatever ascetic practices you undergo, dedicate them all unto Me. By donating the fruits of all actions, good or bad, you will be liberated from the bondage associated with such actions. Thus endowed with the spirit of renunciation, you’ll attain Me and freedom from all acts and their consequences.”

The Lord is satisfied with very little of the material offerings, if they are offered with absolute devotion. Material offerings sans devotion do not qualify as a proper gift, fit for giving to the Supreme Being. Instead a far better offering would be to submit all fruits of all actions at His feet. These will enable one to be free of all bondage resulting from action. The perception that “I am the Doer”, the ego, the very thought that we are responsible for all our actions and fruits, are the causes of bondage. If one foregoes the ego, if one is able to understand that one is not the doer but an instrument in the hand of the Lord and if one therefore dedicates all fruits resulting from action to the Supreme Being as the highest form of offering, without any desire for any selfish gain, one is sure to be liberated from all bondages.

“I am equal to every living being, no one is My favourite, nor anyone is My enemy, however those who worship Me with fervent devotion, i.e. My best devotees are always in Me and I, too am in them.”

The Supreme Being is indifferent. However that applies only to the non devotees. He is everything and every being and therefore His apparent indifference is to enable the different beings to enjoy the fruits of their actions. He does not hate sinners, nor does He love the virtuous. He is very close to only His devotees. These devotees through their sincere love for God get nearer to Him and He cannot stay away from them, just as mother and father cannot stay away from their children.

“Even if the greatest of the sinners worship Me sincerely with concentrated mind, He becomes a saint and is treated thus. Very rapidly he progresses and becomes a sage and obtains eternal bliss. *Kaunteya*, you may declare this fact that My devotee never perishes. Whoever is devoted to Me, even if they are born under a circumstance that is devoid of virtue, women (being deprived of the right to study the scriptures), *Vaishyas* and *Sudras* (being born of lower castes), will all attain greater state (of spirituality). Therefore what to speak of virtuous *Brahmins* and devoted royal sages. Better worship Me by getting this impermanent unhappy state of being called the world. Be immersed in My thoughts, be devoted to Me, worship Me, bow

down to Me. You will attain Me by being ever united with Me through constant devotion.”

The greatest message is that of redemption of the sinner. However heinous a sin is, if the sinner becomes a sincere devotee then he or she by the Lord’s grace can become a saint. The history of India corroborates many such incidents where sinners have turned into great devotees – like Girish Chandra Ghosh, Jagai-Madhai, sage Valmiki and so on. Many such sinners with steadfast devotion became saints. A devotee will not perish or lost from the Lord, is the declaration of *Gita*.

The statement concerning women have sometimes being condemned by liberals as being “anti woman”, because they are named along with sinners. Same is the case with *Vaishyas* and *Sudras*. However this statement is one of the most profound. It declares unequivocally that even though distinctions may exist in the worldly affairs among sexes, castes, nature etc. such distinctions do not exist in the eyes of the Supreme Being. To the soul of all souls there are only two categorizations – devotee and non devotee. A devotee is certain to gain the greater state of spirituality. Women who were devoid of the fundamental rights of studying *Vedas* and other scriptures were at a disadvantage to the pious *Brahmins*. However that did not preclude them from realizing God if they were sufficiently sincere. Similarly the people belonging to inferior castes also could realize God. *Sri Ramakrishna* made almost same observation in the gospels, “a devotee has no caste or other such distinctions.”

The pious *Brahmins* and virtuous *Kshatriya* had a greater chance of realizing God because the circumstances were more favorable to them. Therefore *Sri Krishna* advised *Arjuna* to strive for perfection as the latter was aided by circumstances. Being immersed in the thoughts and works of God is a way by which the bonds with the *Samsara* or the world, which is full of tribulations, can be broken.

## CHAPTER 10: THE YOGA OF SPECIAL POWER AND ITS MANIFESTATION

*Lord Krishna* said, “Once again, Oh mighty warrior, hear My great teachings, that I, tell you, my affectionate one, for your benefit. Neither the gods, nor the great sages know my origin. I am ancient to all gods and sages. That non deluded one who knows Me, the eternal and unborn, as the Lord of the worlds, overcomes all earthly tribulations.”

The Supreme Being is not born, nor has it any death. It is the eternal spirit and the Universal soul which also resides in the human heart as the human Self or *atman*. Therefore neither gods, nor sages, who are created beings, can gauge its origin or dissolution. Those who are able to know the Lord as the eternal and non-decaying Self, have the supreme knowledge and therefore are liberated.

*Sri Krishna* continued, “Good qualities like Intelligence, knowledge, non delusion, compassion, truth, continence, tranquility, pairs of opposites like happiness and misery, existence and non existence, fear and courage, essential characteristics like non violence, equanimity, contentment, ascetic practices, charity, fame and disrepute, are all different attributes of living beings, which originate from Me.”

These attributes are different qualities that appear in varying degrees in human beings. These qualities decide how much advanced a person is in terms of enlightenment. Fear is *Tamasik* (attribute of darkness) i.e. a basic instinct, while the courage is a *Sattvik* (attribute of knowledge) quality. Happiness and misery are qualities of *rajas* or passion. All others in varying degree belong to one of the three qualities or *gunas* of nature. All these *gunas* arise from the Supreme Being, but the Supreme Being itself is untainted by them.

“The seven ancient great *Rishis* or *Saptarshis*, the four *Manus* or originators of the species of different kinds belonging to all abodes, heavenly or earthly, they were all born out of My mind.”



He further went to explain that verily anybody, who understands these great powers and assets of the Lord, firmly establishes himself in communion with the God i.e. all his doubts disappear. The Lord is the origin of everything, from Him everything comes out. Knowing this the wise men possessed of devotion worship Him. To these, ever united in love with the Lord and ever worshipping Him, the Supreme Lord provides wisdom through which He is attainable. Unto them, out of compassion He bestows His supreme grace of dispelling of the darkness (in their own hearts) born out of ignorance and they get illuminated (and liberated) by this light of knowledge.

A devotee and a seeker of divine wisdom, who constantly meditates upon the Lord, who has no other (worldly) thoughts and aspirations, earn the supreme knowledge through devotion. Thus *bhaktiyoga* and *jnanayoga* have the same end results, that of knowledge which enlightens and illuminates the self. A devotee thus knows the Self to be the Supreme Lord who dwells in the hearts of all beings. The divine knowledge destroys all miseries and desires born out of ignorance and establishes the seeker on a plane of eternal joy and bliss. Thus the devotee is liberated in his very life through the grace bestowed upon him.

*Arjuna* said, “You are the great Supreme Lord, the great refuge, untainted and pure, beyond the material universe. You are the soul who is eternal and divine. You are the most ancient of all gods. You are unborn. This is how the great sages like *Asita*, *Devala*, and *Vyasa* refer to You. You Yourself are now telling me this. I consider all these, whatever You have told me, to be true. Verily, oh Lord, nobody can know your divinity, be it gods or the demons. You, the nourishment provider for all beings, the Supreme Lord of all beings, God of all gods, the owner of the Universe, only Yourself know Yourself.

You should tell me all about Your divine powers and manifestations, with which the whole Universe is shrouded by You. How am I to know You by constantly thinking of You? What are the chief characteristics that I would be associating with You while meditating upon You? Please tell me again and again about Your manifestations and powers, because I do not get satisfied even after listening to Your nectar like words time and again.”



*Arjuna*, like an ardent devotee and disciple, is not satisfied with the knowledge he has received so far. More he hears, more he pines to hear, such is the magic of the divine. He wants to know about all powers and manifestations of the Lord, which would enable him to think constantly about Him.

## MANIFESTATIONS

*Sri Krishna* agreed to tell *Arjuna* about His special manifestations with a caveat, that since there is no end to His manifestations or powers, He would only tell about the main ones.

“I am *Atman*, oh *Gudakesha* (*Arjuna*), who dwells in the hearts of all living beings. I am the beginning (birth or creation), the middle (of lifespan or preservation), the end (death or destruction) of all beings.”

The Supreme Lord is also the supreme soul, *Atman* of all *yogis*, by realizing whom all ignorance vanishes and the veil of *Maya* falls down. What is *Brahman* or Supreme Being (of *jnanis*) is also the *Atman* and also the God (of devotees). He is the beginning and end. He is the creator, preserver and destructor, *Brahma*, *Vishnu* and *Shiva*, the holy trinity, molded in one. He is the Time who takes away life and who brings about destruction of all.

“ Of the twelve *Adityas*, or the sons of *Aditi*, I am *Vishnu*, of the luminous bodies I am the sun, of the seven kinds of universal forces called *Maruts* I am *Marichi*, of the stars in the firmament I am the moon (who shines more brightly than any other star in the night sky).”

The twelve *Adityas*, including *Indra*, the king of gods, are the sons of *Aditi*, the wife of sage *Kashyap*. *Aditi* is the mother of gods as *Diti*, the other wife of *Kashyap*, the mother of demons. *Vishnu* is the younger brother of *Indra* and hence is another designated god. However this *Vishnu* is also the part of the Supreme Being, also called *Vishnu*, who pervades the entire universe (*Vish* in Sanskrit – to surround). *Aditya Vishnu* is one of the holy trinities of *Brahma*, *Vishnu* and *Rudra*, the preserver of the universe. *Maruts* were first born of *Diti* when she wanted to have a son to destroy *Indra*. However when the son was in mother’s womb, *Indra* with his thunder rod or *vajra*,

fragmented them into seven pieces who were born as the seven *Maruts*. In another version of the story, those seven pieces were further fragmented into seven each and thus there were forty nine *Maruts*. The *Maruts* are part of the god of wind *Pavan* and thus are considered to be the universal forces. The *Maruts* subsequently became gods and subjects of *Indra*. *Marichi* is also the name of a foremost sage (one of the seven ancient sages). Moon is considered as a star here as it appears on the night sky along with other luminous bodies, and of all these the moon is the brightest one.

“Of the *Vedas*, I am *Sama Veda*, of the gods I am *Vasava* or *Indra*, of the organs of senses I am mind, and of all beings I am the (all pervading) consciousness.”

There are four *Vedas* – *Ric*, *Sama*, *Yajur*, and *Atharva* as per the categorization done by *Veda Vyasa*. *Sama* deals with hymns or songs in praise of the Lord and those hymns are immensely popular. They are recited by the *Brahmacharin* disciples living in a Guru’s house. They are also sung during sacrifices. *Indra* is the lord of all gods. Mind is the most powerful of all senses. All senses owe their allegiance to the mind. Without mind no sense objects can be perceived. Mind together with intelligence also control the body of all living beings. Consciousness is the chief characteristics of all living beings.

“Of the (eleven) *Rudras*, I am *Sankara*. Of the *Yakshas* and *Rakshas*, I am *Kubera*. Of the *Vasus* I am *Pavak* (Fire god). Of the peaks I am *Meru*.”

“Of the priests know Me to be *Vrihaspati*, the chief of them all, of the fighters, I am *Skanda*, of all water bodies I am the ocean.”

*Vrihaspati* is the guru and official priests of the gods. *Skanda* is *Kartika*, the son of *Shiva*, who is also the chief lieutenant of the gods. Ocean is the biggest body of the water and hence is a symbol of Infinity - God. One can only perceive the infiniteness of God by looking into a vast expanse which Ocean is.

“Of all great sages, I am *Bhrigu*, among the words I am *Omkara* or *Pranava*, among *yajnas* I am the recitation of names (of gods) and among all immobile objects, I am *Himalayas*.

*Bhrigu* was one of the first of sages who was the father of *Sukracharya*. According to the *Puranas* he had cursed *Vishnu* to take birth on the earth among men and animals. *Omkara* or *Pranava* is the depiction of the Supreme Being in word or letter. It is believed that this was the word in the beginning of creation. It is also called the *Anahata Shabda* as it is never reflected by any medium and is always heard by the *Yogis*. The recitation of names with concentration is said to be the most effective of all sacrifices because it cleanses and purifies the mind. The grandest of all geographical objects is *Himalayas*. *Himalayas* is a vast body of mountains and thereby reveal the infinite to an ordinary mind.

“Of all trees I am *Asvattha* or banyan tree, among the godly sages I am *Narada*, among the celestial singers I am *Chitraratha* and of the *Siddhas* I am *Kapila*.”

*Asvattha* has a special significance as the entire world has been compared with an inverted *Asvattha* tree in the fifteenth chapter of the *Gita*. *Narada* is foremost among *devarshis*, celestial singers or *Gandharvas* have *Chitraratha* as their king who appears several times in *Mahabharata*. *Kapila* or the golden one was a great ancient sage who was also the founder of the *Sankhya* school of philosophy. In *Srimad Bhagavat Purana*, *Kapila* is regarded as an incarnation of *Vishnu*.

“Know me to be *Ucchaishrava* among the horses, born of the nectar of immortality. I am *Airavat* among elephants and kings among men.”

*Ucchaishrava*, the horse, was found during the churning of the ocean when he rose along with the nectar of immortality. He subsequently became a property of *Indra*, the king of gods. *Airavata* is the war elephant of *Indra* and is white in color. Kings are the most powerful among men. Thus anything grand, great or powerful is God's attribute.

“Among the various weapons I am the thunder (belonging to *Indra*). Among the cows I am the *Kamadhenu*, among the ones who are capable of bearing offspring, I am *Kandarpa*, of the serpents I am *Vasuki*.”

Thunder is the weapon of *Indra* which was manufactured with the bones of the sage *Dadhichi* who sacrificed himself for the sake of the work of the gods. *Kamadhenu* is the cow which provides any object of desire. *Kandarpa* is best known for ethereal beauty. *Vasuki* is the king of the serpents.

“Among the *Nagas*, I am *Ananta*, among the aquatic beings I am *Varuna*, of the *Pitrs*, I am *Aryaman*, of the controllers, I am *Yama*.”

*Ananta* is the *Naga* on whose coil rests Vishnu, the preserver of the world. *Varuna* is the king of the aquatic world. *Aryaman* is one of the most ancient of the gods who is one of the twelve *Adityas*, sons of Aditi. *Yama* is the giver of the fruits of action of the mortals.

“Of the demons I am *Prahlada*, of the accountants I am *Kala* or Time, among the animals I am the lion, the king of all animals, of the birds I am *Gaduda*, the son of *Vinata*.”

*Prahlada* was the son of the demon *Hiranyakashipu*. *Prahlada* was a virtuous soul and was devoted to the Lord of the Universe, *Hari* from his childhood. For this reason he was much despised by his father, the demon king who tried to kill him. Every time he was miraculously saved by the Supreme Lord. In the end *Hiranyakashipu*, who was immune from being killed by any man, was killed by *Hari* in the form of *Nrsimha* – half man half beast. Since *Prahlada* is the best among the *asuras* owing to his devotion, he is regarded as a manifestation. Time is the destroyer of everything, nobody can escape time. Time keeps an account of all actions, good or bad and decides the fate accordingly. Hence it is the best among accountants. Lion is the king of the beasts. *Gaduda* is the king of the birds.

“Of the purifying entities I am *Pavan*, the wind god, of the weapon wielders I am *Rama*, among the fishes I am *Makara*, among the rivers I am *Jahnavi* or *Ganga*.”

*Pavan*, the wind, flows faster than any other entity. *Rama* is the very incarnation of *Vishnu*. He was the great warrior prince of *Ramayana* and the incarnation of Lord *Vishnu* on the earth. *Makara* is the largest among the fishes and *Ganga* is verily the goddess who came down in the form of a river to wash away the sins of millions, who originated from the feet of *Vishnu*.

“Among the created entities I am the origin, dissolution and even the middle (life or existence). Among all the sciences I am the science of the *Atman* and among the discussions I am the argument for the sake of arrival at the truth, called *Vada*.”

“Among the different alphabets I am “A” the first among all alphabets, among the various compounds I am *dvanda* or the compound of two separate entities. I am the imperishable Time. I am the giver of the fruits of actions. I am the all encompassing.”

“I am death, which carries away everything, I am also the prosperity among future prospects, of the feminine traits I am fame, wealth, knowledge, memory, merit, fortitude and compassion.”

The different feminine attributes, according to *Puranas*, were the daughters of *Daksha Prajapati* (progenitor) who were married to *Dharma*, the god of virtue and justice.

“Of the *Samas*, I am *Brihat Sama*, of the metres I am *Gayatri*, of the months I am *Agrahayan*, of the seasons I am spring.”

*Agrahayan* is considered to be one of the auspicious months of the Indian calendar. *Agra* is the first and *ayan* is the movement of the sun. Also *Margashirsha* is derived from *Mrgashira* star. *Brihatsama* is one of the *Samas* which involves invocation to the Lord. *Gayatri* is considered to be a very auspicious chant. Spring is the best of all seasons as nature is at its best during this period.

“Of the unfair practices adopted I am *dyuta* or the game of dice, I am the might of the mighty, I am the victory, I am the industriousness, I am the goodness in tranquil souls.”

“Among the *Vrishnis* I am *Vasudeva*, among the *Pandavas* I am *Arjuna*, among the sages I am *Vyasa*, among the seers I am *Ushana* or *Sukracharya*.”

“Among the subjugators (of evil propensities) I am law, I am the code (of battle) among those who are desirous of victory, of the secret ones I am the silence, I am wisdom of the wise.”

*Sri Krishna* then concludes, “Know that the seed of creation of every being is in Me, without Me there can never be anything in the Universe. Oh *Parantapa* (scorcher of foes - *Arjuna*), there is no end to my divine manifestations. I have told you all about these manifestations in a nutshell. Wherever you see special manifestation of power (in any being), know that it is a part of My own power. On the other hand, what would you do by knowing all these? Know that I surround this entire Universe, which rests only in one part of Me.”

The Lord finally reveals that knowing about all these manifestations does not really convey anything because verily the Supreme Lord is everything and everything is in the Supreme Being. To know His special manifestation one can think of the objects which are vast and have special powers and status among the three worlds. However they all fall short of Him as the entire Universe is merely a small constituent. There is no end to His greatness and vastness as He is infinite, without limit and without beginning or end.



## CHAPTER 11: THE YOGA OF UNIVERSAL FORM

*Arjuna* then said, “In giving me the discourse on the great and mysterious spiritual knowledge You have bestowed your supreme grace and a great favour on me, which has dispelled my delusion. I have now heard about the origin and the dissolution of the universe. I have also heard about Your infinite greatness, oh lotus eyed. Since You are the soul of all souls, the Supreme Lord of all beings, I am desirous of seeing Your Supreme form. If You consider me to be capable enough to view that form, then, oh master of all *Yogas*, show me that eternal Self (of Yours).”

*Arjuna* is probably a little skeptical. Like all mortals he too wants a sign to believe Him. Or perhaps he has completely believed his Lord and Guru. He, as a great devotee, has merely one desire, of seeing the form of the chosen ideal. Whatever be the case, the Lord grants him the desire and together with him we are fortunate enough to view that greatest form through the description of the poet.

*Sri Krishna* told *Arjuna* to see His myriads of divine forms which are of various shapes and colours. The gods like the *Adityas*, the *Vasus*, the *Rudras*, the *Maruts*, the two *Ashvins*, and other mysterious beings and scenes which were never seen (by *Arjuna*) can be seen in that great vision which He is about to impart. There, in that great body one would see the entire Universe, with all the mobile and immobile, sentient and non sentient beings. In that great form can be seen any object that *Arjuna* is desirous of seeing. However that form cannot be seen with the normal pairs of eyes. A special vision needs to be provided which would enable one to see that form.

God is beyond all sense perception. Therefore He cannot be revealed with the organs of senses like eyes and ears. He also cannot be perceived with the normal mind and intelligence. However he is perceived only by very pure mind and very pure intelligence (*Sri Ramakrishna – The Gospel*). The vision of God is really a revelation that comes as an inner inspiration. It is not seen, it is realized. But that realization is much stronger and much more real than ordinary sense perception. Only great Yogis can see Him when they reach the pinnacle of their devotion or knowledge. This is

known as the *Siddha* state. This revelation is also the key to *Nirvana* or liberation. The form or formless both can be revealed depending on the inclination and desire of the individual aspiring after the vision. But everything ultimately depends on His grace. It is He who reveals Himself out of compassion. As *Kathopanishad* says, “the *Atman* cannot be perceived by words (of scriptures), nor by intellect, nor by *Vedas*. It is only perceived by those who have an intense desire for its realization. Such desire is only obtained through its grace.”

## VISION OF THE DIVINE

To *Arjuna*, His greatest devotee and his part (as the sage *Nara* in a previous incarnation), He imparts the *Yogic* vision, by which the divine form suddenly becomes real. *Arjuna* can now see a most fascinating and wonderful vision with innumerable faces and eyes, many mysterious objects in it, adorned with many divine jewels and brandishing many divine weapons.

The Supreme Being in that divine vision is wearing divine garlands and He smells of divine essence or fragrance. He is most fascinating to look at, in his eternal form which faces everywhere.

The splendor of the universal form seemed to be equivalent to the combined splendor of a thousand suns if they would have shined simultaneously on the sky. There, on the body of that universal form, *Arjuna* saw the entire universe differentiated into myriads of forms. By seeing this magnificent vision *Arjuna* became extremely surprised. By bowing down to the great form, with folded hands, he said, “I can see the divine beings in your great body, I can see all the creatures, the creator *Brahma* mounted on the lotus, all the sages and the serpents.”

“Your infinite form consists of innumerable hands, trunks, faces and eyes, encompassing everything. There is no beginning, middle, nor any end to this form. Truly, oh Lord of the Universe, this is your Universal form.”

*Arjuna* saw numerous heads adorned with crowns and innumerable hands holding the maces and discusses. The divine power emanating from that

form was lighting up all directions. The form was difficult to see in any direction. Its splendor was like that of a burning fire or sun with immeasurable energy.

*Arjuna* began to praise that form, “You are indestructible, imperishable and the great object of knowledge. You are the great refuge of the world. You are indeclinable, the upholder of eternal virtue. You are unchanged *Purusha* or the Supreme Soul. I see You as infinite, without beginning or end, with numerous forms superimposed on the divine form. I see Your faces burning like fire. By that power You are engulfing and heating up the entire universe. You alone have covered the heaven and earth, the intervening space and all directions. By seeing Your mysterious terrible form, the three worlds are terrified. There I see the gods entering You. Some are afraid and are praying to You with folded hands. By uttering the word “swasti”, the great sages and the siddhas, are singing the divine chants full of Your praise.”

*Arjuna* saw the *Rudras*, *Adityas*, *Vasus*, demigods called *sadhyas*, *vishwadevas*, *ashvinikumars*, *Maruts* and *Ushmapas*, the *gandharvas*, yakshas, demons and *siddhas*, all looking at that form with great wonder. He continued, “ your form is great, with many faces and eyes, oh mighty armed one, with many arms, thighs and legs, many trunks, many sharp and dreadful teeth. By seeing this terrible form, the worlds are terrified and so I am. That resplendent form with many hues stretches upto the heaven as far as eyes can see, the mouth is gaping, as if intending to devour everything. The eyes are frightfully large and fiery. By seeing this (form) I am frightened. I can’t hold my patience and calmness, nor can I remain tranquil. The faces adorned with the dreadful teeth are looking like the all destructive fire. Seeing it I can hardly remain steady. Oh Lord of the Universe, be gracious unto me.”

*Arjuna* could see the sons of *Dhritarastra*, along with all the kings, *Bhisma*, *Drona*, *Karna* and the warriors of the *Pandava* camp, all entering those terrible mouth with dreadful teeth. Some of them are seen held in that teeth with their heads smashed. He realized that just as the waters of various rivers rush towards the great ocean, so also all the heroes are rushing to embrace the death in that terrible form. Just as the insects being attracted

by the fire rush towards it only to get destroyed, so also all the worlds are entering those mouths to get destroyed. The terrible flames issued from those mouths are burning everywhere and devouring everything. The terrible heat resulting from the divine power of *Vishnu* has encompassed the entire world and is scorching everything.

Suffice it to say, no poetic imagination can create such a vivid description.

### UNIVERSAL FORM AND UNIVERSAL DESTRUCTION

*Arjuna* asked, "Kindly tell me who You are. I bow to You, oh Lord, have mercy. I wish to know You in its entirety. I do not know Your nature."

The devotee has finally seen the terrible form, the form which is seen by only a privileged few and understood by fewer. *Duryadhona* had seen this form before the start of the war when he tried to imprison *Krishna*. However, he was not a devotee and he merely thought it to be some kind of illusion created by a mortal named *Krishna* who had come as a representative of *Pandavas*, his arch enemies. But with *Arjuna* it is different. He is friend, disciple and devotee, all molded into one. He believes the form he sees to be that of the Universal Lord. He sees with his own eyes that the entire world rests in *Krishna*. Wrong, He in fact is the entire world and much more. He creates, He preserves and He destroys. In Him rests all beings, from lowest and crudest animal forms to the highest divinities like Brahma. That terrible form does not have any beginning or end. It has covered all directions. It has so many limbs, bodies and faces. It is He who has become this Universe and Himself remains in it, like a spider that has brought forward the web and rests in it. In Him *Arjuna* sees the results of the bloody war that he is going to fight and the fate of the mankind. Verily, that terrifying form is destruction personified. His great power scorches the Universe. His terrible teeth know no mercy. Who is He? He does not gel well with a devotee's concept of an all merciful Lord.

*Sri Krishna* answers, "I am that all devouring eternal Time. I am engaged in annihilation. Even if you do not fight, nobody will survive (this war). All the warriors will be destroyed. Therefore, arise, win your fame and victory, enjoy the fruits of that victory in the form of a great and prosperous kingdom (enjoy while it lasts). All these are already killed by Me and Me

alone. Oh *Savyasacin*, you merely become My instrument. *Bhisma*, *Drona*, *Jayadhratha*, *Karna* and others (whom you are going to fight), have already been slaughtered by Me. Fight the battle and win over them, do not be weak."

Time has chosen this great battle of *Kurukshetra* to claim a host of victims. The great powers which had made the world tremble by their arrogance, violent acts, hatreds, enmities, blood feuds, lust and greed, corruption and thirst for more power, are to be destroyed. Whenever virtue subsides and vices reign supreme, the Time wields its sword and a great phenomenon appears on the world stage, one who becomes harbinger of a new ideal and brings forth a new message of hope, one who brings in His wake large scale annihilation to establish dharma, to protect the devotees. That force drove the last nail in the coffin for *Brahmin* orthodoxy when sacrificial rites and wanton killings were all that were left of *Vedic* religion. Buddhism consisting of four noble truths and eightfold path and the peace and bliss of *Tripitaka* swept North India and most of Asia. That force destroyed the Romans and drove the Jews to isolation for thousands of years when the son of man was crucified. That force drove Buddhists away from India and reestablished the great and pure ideology of *Sanatan Dharma* on the basis of *Puranas* on the one hand and *Advaita Vedanta* on the other and set up the monastic order, when what had remained of Buddhism was meaningless barbaric rituals and customs borrowed from the tribal and the alien races beyond the Himalayas. That force stopped the great Muslims in their bid to convert the whole of India into Islam, by unleashing the power of *Bhakti* or devotion on the masses, by embracing the lowly and outcastes into its loving fold, and brought down the Islamic empire to its knees. That same force battled a far more formidable enemy consisting of a rejuvenated Europe, its scholars and intellectuals, its scientific dogmas, its Christian Missionaries and its absolute ridicule of anything Oriental, and presented magnanimously the grandest universal idealism of *Vedanta* and universal harmony to an astounded world, in its wake leaving behind two world wars and a shattered European imperialism. It reached the pinnacle of glory in living through five thousand years of India's spiritual life in just a few years and reestablished the grandest ideals of renunciation and love .

That same force is now working in *Kurukshetra*, slowly and silently. The fates of the warriors are sealed. Whether *Arjuna* battles or not, it does not matter to that force. It has chosen the end result; it merely searches for an instrument to accomplish the same. If *Arjuna* dithers on account of his weakness, it will look for another agent. Therefore it is up to *Arjuna* to become that agent and earn fame and righteous victory for himself and for his brothers who have been wronged by inimical forces. Blood relations, non violence, compassion etc. have no place here because destruction is a natural law. The accumulated fruits of actions of these warriors will bring their own destruction by Time, *Arjuna* is not the cause of this destruction and therefore he does not have to bear the consequences.

An explanation here: There are many objections to *Bhagavat Gita* from the scholars on account of this message of asking to fight a battle in which many will be destroyed. To some, it glorifies violence over mercy etc. and is therefore abhorrent. To others, it does not preach love and compassion, and is therefore devoid of a great spiritual message. Still others find *Arjuna's* initial stand to be superior to Sri Krishna's message, i.e. under such a condition it's better to relinquish the claims to the throne than to fight as fighting means intention to kill which is not religion.

In the first place, *Arjuna's* initial position is not that of compassion or kindness but of pity and weakness. He decided not to fight not on account of a love of humanity as a *Buddha* would have probably done, but out of fear of the consequences of fighting. If fighting evil is unwarranted, then many more innocent people would be killed in the hands of demoniac forces. This has been repeatedly proved in history, the most recent example being that of the Second World War and the extermination of the innocent Jews. Many innocent persons could have been saved if somebody could have conquered and killed Timur. The path of *dharma*, as claimed in *Gita*, is indeed perilous. But it is suffice to say that *dharma* is what *vahujana hitaya* - i.e. what is good to a majority. If for protecting innocents and destroying evil a war has to be fought, even a *Buddha* would have supported that war wholeheartedly.

That is why ancient Indians demarcated between a *Dharma Yudhya* - battle for the sake of virtue and *Adharma Yudhya* - battle for pride and



supremacy. This battle which is being fought by Arjuna is for the sake of establishment of virtue, for avenging injustice and wrong doings. Unless this is fought, it would set a very wrong precedence in the history. It is the duty of the *Kshatriyas* to punish misdeeds. If misdeeds go unpunished it will lead to a complete collapse of law and order and crime will flourish.

Secondly, everyone should follow their own duty; otherwise there will be social chaos. If *kshatriyas* do not fight how will good people be protected? It is the duty of the king to fight against invading enemies in order to protect his subjects. So violence is necessary. Only a *Sannyasin*, one who has renounced everything, will not have any duty. Others are duty bound.

Thirdly, destruction and death are natural consequences of life. If one is born, one has to die. War is just a cause of destruction. The all destroying time does not exempt anybody. When destruction is inevitable what is there to grieve esp. when one is fighting for a just cause? Only cowards would step back from fighting for a just cause. Looking from the aspect of *Gita*, if we are *Atman* – the immortal, eternal, unborn, non-decaying, and not merely bodies with which we identify ourselves, there is no killing, nor is anybody getting killed. Only the bodies are getting destroyed, the *Atman* cannot be destroyed.

Fourthly, any work done in a detached spirit, i.e. unselfish manner, does not bind anybody. This means that if one works with the true knowledge that one is not the doer but merely an instrument, one is not chained by the consequence of the action. Detachment is the cause of liberation; attachment is the cause of bondage. Therefore if the war is fought in a detached spirit, it is merely surrender to the divine will. If the divine will is destruction, so be it. New order cannot be created unless the old order is destroyed and therefore history has repeatedly shown that great destruction and carnage often resulted in great blessings for the future mankind. The outcome of the *Kalinga* war was the death of hundred thousand but the birth of a great emperor *Ashoka* who put Buddhism on a firm footing around the world. Unless weeds are uprooted one cannot plant green foliage in their place. The divine will can also be realized through a total surrender, if detachment is not possible.

But then anybody can kill anybody else and justify the killing. Fundamentalists can call others evil and destroy them. What is the way to differentiate between one who is a true follower of *Gita* and one who is a hypocrite? The answer is simple. Those who are killing others by citing *Gita*, just go and try to kill them or their near and dear ones. All their pretence will fall. They will be mortally afraid and will try to protect themselves and their family from being destroyed. Fundamentalists are cowards as they kill innocent men. They try to escape the consequences and a few greater cowards among them commit suicide in order to reap a great reward in heaven by killing infidels. A true follower of *Gita* will be equally unperturbed when he himself or his near and dear ones are getting destroyed and will not have any desire like reaping the fruits in an afterlife. When *Yadavas* were killing themselves mercilessly in a civil war, *Sri Krishna* was a mute spectator. Nor was he ever disturbed when his own nephew *Abhimanyu* was killed in *Mahabharata* war.

## NON VIOLENCE

The main message of *Gita* is renunciation. One should renounce everything and take refuge with the Lord, that's the underlying message. This can be done in various ways for people of various temperaments. Some may follow the path of acquiring supreme knowledge by denying anything material and in the external world, a practice commonly called "*Neti*", "*Neti*" or "Not This, Not This". Some may follow the path of devotion and total surrender. Some may follow the path of detached work, by surrendering the fruits of action to divine will. Still some others may follow the path of Yoga or contemplation, control of mind, and ascetic practices. The ultimate goal is self surrender for the realization of the Supreme Bliss.

In several places *Gita* advocates non violence as one of the highest means of achieving the Supreme Truth and it also a characteristics of one who has realized the Supreme. It is a divine quality. It is the characteristics trait of the *Brahmins*, the highest class. It is the characteristics of the highest class of devotee and it should be based not on any morality or ethics, but on seeing the Self or *Atman* in every body, by seeing everybody in the *Atman*. When one has achieved the wisdom, one knows that the world is God, everybody is God and God is in everybody. Or in other words everything is the Supreme Bliss – the *Brahman*, or in other sense, everything is *Atman*, the

Supreme Self. Under such a circumstance if one is injuring another, he is injuring oneself. A devotee cannot think of injuring the God whom he sees in every living being, that's why he is non violent. A person of divine trait is non violent because it is his nature not to harm anything or anybody, irrespective of whether he sees God in every being or not. A Yogi is non violent as he sees the Self or *Atman* everywhere. A true non violent person will not be afraid of vicious animals, nor would anybody be afraid of him. They will only find love and compassion with him. He will be able to conquer everybody with love and compassion. Unless one reaches that state it is dangerous to advocate non violence for everybody under every circumstance, esp. to a *Kshatriya* like *Arjuna* who is duty bound to protect others and to uphold virtue.

In another sense the battlefield may also be an allegory. *Sri Krishna* is our *Guru* or the supreme guide, the chariot is the body, *Arjuna* is the intelligence and the enemies are the lust, greed, ego, pride, anger, delusion etc. Only by the grace of the God or the *guru* are these enemies conquered. Otherwise the intelligence, being deluded is too afraid to fight for the sake of attainment of the Supreme Truth.

So violence is not the message, nor is non violence. *Gita* teaches one to reject both and go beyond light and darkness – *Nistraigunya bhava Arjuna*. By transcending the three *gunas* one is able to gain the Supreme Knowledge and Bliss. Violence, non violence, good, evil, light, darkness etc. are all qualities – pairs of opposites. One cannot exist without the other as darkness is merely absence of light; non violence is absence of violence. So unless one can think of light one cannot think of darkness. Similarly unless there is violence the concept of non violence becomes meaningless. Much evil is there in the world so that one can understand and appreciate the goodness, kindness. The Supreme Being sans any attribute or quality is beyond all pairs of opposites and to get to that state one has to reach that state by going beyond the pairs of opposites. This is only possible by completely renouncing ego ("I", "Mine") and desire.

## PRAISES SUNG BY ARJUNA AND THE END OF THE VISION

After seeing the Universal form and after listening to all Lord *Krishna* said about why he had ordained the war and what the significance of that terrible form was, *Arjuna* was greatly moved. Folding both hands and trembling (in delight mingled with fear), bowing to *Krishna*, he said in a voice choked with emotion, “Oh *Rishikesh*, when You are praised, the entire world rejoices and get attracted to You, the demons fly hither and thither (out of fear), everybody bows down to you, including the *siddhas*.”

He continued in the same vein, “Who will not bow down to You, oh great soul? You, the ancient Lord, are greater than *Brahma*, the creator Himself. You are limitless, Lord of all *devas*, the refuge of the entire world. You are beyond existence and non existence. You are the ancient Lord, the One at the beginning, the *Purusha* or the cosmic soul. You are the greatest shelter of the entire world. You are the Knower and the Known, the great refuge. You are pervading the entire universe in Your infinite glory. *Vayu*, the Lord of wind, *Yama*, the Lord of the dead, *Agni*, the Lord of fire, *Varuna*, the Lord of water, the Lord of Moon, the ancient progenitors and their fathers, all are You. I bow down to You thousand times. I bow down to You once again, again and again. I bow down to You in the front, at Your back, I bow down to You who is the All in All. You are of infinite power and unlimited strength. You have in You everything and hence You are everything.”

*Arjuna* now has a different line of thought. Thinking of his previous relationship with friend *Krishna*, he is afraid, of all the jests and natural friendly behavior with the Supreme Lord. He therefore says, “By thinking you all along as friend, whatever I have said in jest, by calling You, the Lord, as “oh *Krishna*”, “oh *Yadav*”, “oh friend”, without knowing Your glory and real nature, all may have been from either error or (friendly) love. Whatever wrongs that I have committed while sleeping, eating, sitting and roaming together, in front of You or others, please forgive those deviations, Oh immeasurable One.”

“You are the father of this Universe; You are to be worshipped, greater than the Guru. No One exists in this world who is equal to You, so none can be greater than You, the incomparable One. Therefore I bow to You by

lying down in front of You, please forgive Me, the most adorable One. Just as a father forgives his son, or a friend forgives a friend, or a lover forgives his dear one, so please forbear with me. By seeing the terrible universal form which I have never seen before, I am delighted, but also I am very afraid. Please show me once again your original pleasant form. Be merciful, Oh Lord of lords and refuge of all. I would like to see that diadem decked form of yours, having mace and disc and the four arms, oh thousand armed, oh master of the Universe.”

The Lord said, “Being satisfied with you, I have shown you the great universal form of mine by the special *Yoga* power of mine. This divine form of great power and infinite and endless span has not been seen by anybody else before you. Not *Veda*, sacrifices, study of scriptures, nor gifts or charities, nor ascetic practices, nor difficult and painstaking rituals, are going to be of any use in revealing the form which I have revealed to you. Therefore do not be afraid and get rid of the stupefaction which has set in by seeing this terrible form of mine. I’ll show you the benign form by which you will be able to recover yourself and be joyous.”

With this, the Lord showed *Arjuna* His original form once again and comforted him by assuming the benign and pleasant nature.

*Arjuna* was much pleased and said that he is now comforted and once again recovered his steadiness.

The Lord then said that this (terrible universal) form of His, which He revealed to *Arjuna*, is rare to see and demigods or *devas* always wish to see this form. However He is not seen in that form through (study of) *Vedas*, nor that form is seen through ascetic merits, nor through gifts and charities, nor through grand sacrifices. Only devotees of the highest standard, who constantly seek His companion and think of Him, He can be known, seen and can be revealed in that form. Such devotees are those who always perform His work (like service, worship, meditation and recital of name), who are immersed in His thoughts, who are devoted to Him being unattached to any worldly thing, who never bear any ill will against anybody, and they attain to Him only.

## CHAPTER 12: THE YOGA OF SUPREME DEVOTION

*Arjuna* said, “those devotees that worship You wholeheartedly and steadfastly and those who are more inclined towards meditating upon the unmanifest and eternal Supreme Being (rather than worshipping any particular form), of them who are the best in *Yoga* in Your opinion?”

This is an indirect question. The basic intent behind *Arjuna's* question was that who is superior - one who follows the path of *Jnana* or knowledge of the unmanifest, or one who is devoted to the worship of forms, the follower of the path of *Bhakti* or devotion and dualism. The follower of the path of *Jnana* is often monist or believer in *Advaita* – the undifferentiated unity of God, Nature and Universe. To the *jnani*, the universe with all its names and forms is only apparent, illusory, being modified through the prism of *Maya*. Only the *Brahman* or the Supreme Being is the truth, everything else is a reflection of that *Brahman*, just as sun reflects in different containers of water.

The Lord said, “Those who are attached to Me and worship Me by being in constant union with Me, with great devotion, are the best, to My mind. However, those who are more inclined towards the unmanifest, the formless aspect, the infinite, all pervading and beyond comprehension, the eternal and imperishable, have to repress all sense organs and look upon everything as same i.e. *Brahman*. This path is full of hardships and one with body consciousness cannot succeed here because of the trials and tribulations involved.”

The path of *Jnana* is full of sufferings. It is like the razor's edge, very sharp and almost impassable. One having even slightest affiliation to one's body cannot succeed here because of the trials needed. If the universe is an illusion, so is the body. To forget the body one has to forfeit all desires as desires make up the body. This is very difficult, so it consists of more trials and tribulations. There is no end to suffering in this path, but in the end, if one is able to remain steadfast, there is supreme bliss.

This path is not for *Arjuna*. Therefore *Sri Krishna* tells him, “whosoever dedicates all the actions and fruits upon Me, becomes immersed in My



thoughts, constantly meditates upon Me, I very soon become his protector from the vast ocean of life and death – the world. Therefore surrender your mind to Me, put your intelligence (thoughts) in Me. In this manner you will stay in Me, there is no doubt.”

## **PATHS OF DEVOTION**

The Lord now provides various options according to the temperament and tendencies of the individual. If one is unable to fix the mind upon the Lord, one needs to constantly practice the concentration. Called “*abhyasa yoga*”, constant practice enables one to get over evil tendencies through perseverance. Through this constant practice one can wish to realize God. This wish, this desire of achieving the most difficult goal is the motive force behind the “*abhyasa*”. Unless one is motivated by such an ardent goal, one can never sustain the practice and is bound to give up. But if constant practice is too much for an individual, he or she can take up some service of God, viz. worship, meditation on His form, charities, reading scriptures etc. through these works mind gets purified and a purified mind ultimately leads to realization.

If this is also not possible to achieve *Yoga* or union, one has to renounce all fruits of actions.

Thus the Lord, by explaining the various paths prescribed for persons of different tendencies, actually illustrates the paths of *Jnana*, *abhyasa*, *karma* and *Bhakti*. A true devotee will relinquish all fruits of actions because he/she will surrender himself or herself wholeheartedly to the Lord. Every act that the devotee does is actually the Lord’s work and therefore he/she does not have any right to its fruit. The real test of a devotee lies in complete surrender and therefore a devotee is a true *Sannyasin*.

The last one, *Bhakti*, is thus very superior to others as it calls for a supreme sacrifice, viz. oneself. The devotee forgets his/her identity and becomes the Lord’s instrument. *Sri Krishna* says, *Jnana* is superior to *abhyasa*, *dhyana* or meditation is superior to *Jnana*, renouncing the fruits of action is even superior because from renunciation one derives supreme peace.

## WHO IS A TRUE DEVOTEE

Now what are the characteristics of a true devotee? The Lord provides us with a vivid description. A true devotee must be devoid of any aversion towards any being, will be friendly and compassionate to all, will be devoid of possessiveness (“I” and “Mine”) and ego, will be merciful, and will treat happiness and sorrow in the same vein.

Why devoid of aversion? A true devotee (*uttama bhakta* in the language of *Sri Ramakrishna*) will see the Lord in every being. Therefore whom will he/she love and whom will he/she hate? He/she is therefore friendly and compassionate towards all. He/she knows that all things belong to God and God alone; therefore he/she is devoid of any possessiveness like wealth, wife, children, husband, relatives, friends etc. He/she knows that both happiness and sorrow are gifts of God and therefore treats them equally.

A true devotee will be always a Yogi, i.e. in ever union with God, being immersed in the thoughts of God. He/she is ever satisfied, is steadfast in his/her belief and practices, and has dedicated his /her body, mind and intelligence to the God. Therefore such a devotee is God’s dear one.

He/she is ever satisfied because he/she knows that all the time he/she is under the loving refuge of the Lord Himself. Even sorrows are His blessings as they help in strengthening the devotee’s resolve, faith. They make him/her stronger and better. A devotee belongs to the God in body, mind and spirit. There is nothing of him/her that does not belong to the Lord.

The true devotee is never perturbed by the worldly matters. He/she knows everything to be the part of the divine play. Similarly he/she never becomes a reason of agitation in the world as he/she does not truly belong to the world, but to the God. He/she is thus devoid of all passions like material pleasures, ill feelings, fear and anxiety. One who has surrendered himself/herself wholeheartedly to God does not know what these passions are. Therefore they are dear to the Lord.

A true devotee does not depend on any worldly affair, is pure and efficient, is detached (from worldly matters), is free of sorrows, relinquishes all efforts which are not directed towards devotion or which are not influenced or inspired by any spiritual motive. Such a devotee is very dear to the Lord.

A devotee is pure because he/she has no other thoughts other than that of God or that of welfare of all beings. He/she is efficient because he/she is engaged in doing Lord's work and therefore does it wholeheartedly, with full concentration and devotion. Since he/she is not concerned with worldly affairs, he/she does not cherish any worldly ambition. His/her whole life is devoted towards the service of God.

A true devotee does not take pleasure (in worldly affairs), nor does he/she hates anybody, nor does he/she grieves, nor desires for anything. He/she renounces all good and bad and is therefore above the pairs of opposites. Therefore he/she, the devoted one, is very dear to the Lord.

A devotee is therefore above good and bad and likewise other pairs of opposites. Thus through supreme devotion one can transcend the *Gunas* or the qualities of nature.

A true devotee holds a friend and enemy in the same spirit, has no distinction between honor (of self) and dishonor, treats warm and cold in the same light, is devoid of all attachments. He/she is indifferent to either praise or blame, is silent (to the world), is ever contented by getting anything, i.e. has no special desire or demand, does not possess any permanent abode, is composed and tranquil and is full of devotion. Such a devotee is very dear to the God.

Those who with respect and without malice try to follow such principles as illustrated here, such devotees are extremely dear to the Lord, because they try their best to make the God their all in all. Through their devotion God becomes their very own, even their self. Thus by supreme devotion they transcend the barriers between *Bhakti* and *Jnana* and in the end realize that the end result of all paths are same – the Supreme Bliss. All paths converge in that Truth just as all rivers coming down from the mountain ultimately meet in the ocean.



## CHAPTER 13: THE FIELD AND THE KNOWER OF THE FIELD

The Lord now began discourse on one of the most difficult philosophical concepts, that what is called a field and a knower of the field. It may be that *Arjuna* had explicitly asked him on the difference but some of the original versions of the *Gita* do not contain that question. *Sri Krishna* said that the body is called *Kshetra* or field and one who knows this is called *Kshetrajna* or the knower of the field. He said, “Know Me to be the knower of the field for all fields, oh *Bharata*. The knowledge of this field and its knower is the true knowledge according to Me.”

But what is this field? The Lord further continued, “What is this field, what are its properties, what are the modifications, what are the effects, who He is and is His power, hear all that in brief from Me. Many sages have sung in different metres about this principle (i.e. they have diverse opinions), in different *sutras* related to the *Brahman* or the Supreme Being, by the aid of reasons and logic and with certainty and conviction.”

He said that the fivefold gross elements (space or *akashah*, wind or *pranah*, fire or *tejas*, water or *apah* and earth or *bhumih*), the Ego, the Intellect and the Unmanifest (*avyakt*), the ten organs (of sense and action), the mind and the five objects of senses, the pairs of opposites like desire and aversion, happiness and sorrow, the aggregate of body, mind and senses i.e the individual self, the consciousness or will, the fortitude or application of the will, together consist of the *Kshetra* or the field. These are all presented briefly along with their modifications.

The elements join together to constitute all matter and hence are modifiable. The Ego, Intellect, senses and the mind enter that matter and form the conscious object which belong to the realm of the pairs of opposites like pleasure and pain, desire and aversion, being subjected to the threefold qualities of nature (*gunas*). Their aggregate, together with the conscious will and the fortitude, comprises of the individual with the two bodies – the outer gross body and the inner subtle body or the spirit. The Unmanifest forms the third component of the body – called causal body.

All these have their own modifications as they are subjected to the modifiable qualities of the nature. Even a causal body dies. The subtle body also undergoes various changes. The mind changes by becoming purer or more impure, ego changes by increasing or decreasing, intellect sharpens or deteriorates, senses become stronger or weaker, the pairs of opposites gain importance at each other's expense, viz. happiness at the expense of misery, will changes, fortitude may change with time. Therefore all these, taken together become the body of the individual which undergoes various forms of changes.

### **KNOWLEDGE, KNOWER AND OBJECT**

Now *Sri Krishna* tries to identify what is true knowledge and what is the object of the knowledge. Because a Knower must possess of knowledge, it is important to understand the characteristics that are the means of obtaining this knowledge.

Humility, absence of pride, non violence, forbearance, uprightness, service to the teacher, purity, steadiness, self control, dispassion towards objects of senses, lack of egoism or egotism, and reflecting on the miseries associated with birth, death, old age, sickness and associated pains are some of these characteristics. Then comes non attachment and non possessiveness to sons, wives and houses and tranquility irrespective of any situation, be it opportunity or adversity. Ever united in the Lord with unwavering devotion, living in secluded places bereft of contact with people, engaged in pursuing the knowledge of Self (with a *Guru*), gaining *Tatva jnana* or the wisdom of the Self (from the *Guru*) – these are what comprises of the knowledge, everything else is ignorance.

The different characteristics described here are in reality means of achieving the great spiritual knowledge, the realization of the supreme truth. This transcendental knowledge helps one in getting over the sensory world and in knowing the self to be distinct and different from the body, mind and the various modifications.

Now the Supreme Lord said, “Let Me now tell you the object of knowledge, the wisdom of which is equivalent to nectar (as one gets

eternal life, viz. liberation from birth and death by acquiring the True Knowledge). The *Brahman* is infinite, great, and is neither existent, nor said to be nonexistent.”

“It (*Brahman* or the Supreme Being) has its feet and arms everywhere, eyes everywhere, heads and faces everywhere. It can hear everything and it covers everything. It lightens up all senses and qualities, i.e. by its power are driven all the senses and the three qualities of nature (*gunas*), but it is beyond sensory perception and is beyond the qualities. Yet it (as the *Atman*) experiences the senses and the qualities but remain unattached to them. It is also the sustainer of all (as God).”

“It lives both inside (as the *Atman*) and outside (as the all pervading *Brahman*) of the living beings. It is both mobile and immobile. It is extremely fine (beyond senses) and therefore not knowable (with senses). It is both near (in the heart of all beings) and far (beyond perception for the unenlightened and worldly).”

“It is undifferentiated and yet stays in all beings in various forms. It nourishes all beings, destroys and creates them as well.”

“It is the light of all lights; it is beyond all darkness (of the ignorance). It is the knowledge, it is the object of knowledge, it is beyond knowledge. It is situated in the hearts of all.”

The Supreme Being or *Brahman* is all pervading, omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient. It is extremely difficult to describe these “Omni” characteristics. One cannot visualize “omnipresence”. Therefore it is being described as having arms, legs, faces, heads, and eyes everywhere. This signifies that the Supreme Being is everywhere, is a witness to everything. If it is in the heart of every being, it can know everything, even the very thoughts. It can see all events all over the world and it can hear everything spoken or unspoken. It is beyond all actions, no action can bind it. It is beyond the Nature. Nature is its slave, so it is beyond the qualities of the nature and therefore unattached to any desire. Yet, it being the soul and the witness, is also the enjoyer of the qualities and their modifications. Since it is not attached to that enjoyment and is merely witnessing the action



performed by the body mind, it is beyond the consequences or fruits of the action. It is both near (as the indwelling spirit) and far (as difficult to attain, not capable of being realized through the ordinary mind and senses). It is the One, which is manifested as many through *Maya*, just as a sun reflects in many water bubbles and still remain as the one sun. As the Supreme Lord or *Iswara*, it creates, it preserves and it destroys the world. It is beyond the darkness. By realizing it the ignorance goes away and the light of knowledge shines bright. True Knowledge lies in knowing it, it itself is the True knowledge by which it as the object of knowledge can be known. It is however beyond the ordinary knowledge of the world.

Lord *Krishna* said, “This is thus the field, the knowledge, and the object (of knowing or realizing). My devotee, by knowing this, attains Me.”

Having known the Supreme Knowledge or *Brahmanvidya*, nothing else remains to be known. In realizing the Unity of all is the culmination of all knowledge whereby the individual attains liberation from the cycle of birth and death.

### **PURUSHA, PRAKRTI, GUNA AND MODIFICATIONS**

Lord *Krishna* now began to discourse on the *Sankhya* principles of *Purusha* and *Prakrti*. He said that both *Purusha* or the individual soul and the *Prakrti* or the Material Universe including its Nature, are without beginning or end. However all modifications and all qualities (*gunas*) are of the *Prakrti*.

*Prakrti* is the cause of all actions, their sources and their agents or performers. The *Purusha* is the cause of enjoyment of all consequences of such actions, viz. pleasures and pains, by an individual. *Purusha*, when united with the *Prakrti*, comes under the sway of the *Gunas* or the qualities and this affiliation with the qualities is the reason for its transmigration or the participation in the cycle of life and death as the individual body-mind.

As long as the body mind is identified with the individual, it is under the influence of its nature. It is the nature that compels an individual to act. A *Sattvik* person will perform actions bringing happiness in its wake. A *Rajasik* person will perform actions that will lead to pain and sorrow in the

end. A *Tamasik* person only brings about destruction of the self. The *Purusha* (one who resides in the *Puri* or the body) is however not attached to any of these actions or their consequences. It is a witness, although it is behind all actions, since it is the master of all sense organs, intelligence, mind and body. However as long as the *atman* or Self is not realized as separate from the body mind, it is under the influence of nature which presides over the body mind. When the *atman* is realized as being different from the body mind, it is free from the clutches of nature and hence the actions cannot bind it. Therefore this ignorance (i.e. understanding the *atman* to be same as the individual body and mind) is the cause of the cycle of rebirth.

This *Atman* or *Purusha* is the witness, is the sanctifier (of all actions), is the ruler (on all senses which perform actions), is the enjoyer (of the fruits) indirectly through the body, mind and senses, and is the Supreme Lord or the *Iswara*. It is also called the *Paramatman* or the great soul, as it is beyond (the reach of the senses and the material or causal world, the nature).

One who knows this distinction between *Purusha* and the *Prakrti* along with its qualities, even though he is present in this world in every respect, he transcends the world as he is not born again (i.e. he becomes a *jivanmukta*, liberated soul).

Some see the *Atman* (Self), in the self, by self (i.e. they see the *atman* or the indwelling spirit as separate from their bodies and minds and that is possible only through self effort or by the grace of that *atman*) with the aid of the meditation. Others see it through the principles of *Sankhya* (*jnana*), *Yoga* (*Raja Yoga* or the control of the inner forces) or *Karma Yoga* (practice of actions without desire of fruits, selfless actions which lead to purification of mind).

The *Atman* can be perceived through intense meditation when one arrives at a state called *Samadhi* (according to the eightfold path of *Yoga* by sage *Patanjali*). In *Samadhi* or the deepest meditation the distinction among knowledge, object of knowledge and the knower dissolves and the world vanishes into a sublime reality called *Brahman* or the all pervading Supreme Being. In the intense state the ego disappears and the Self or

*Atman* then shines. Neither the sun shines nor the moon or the stars, the lightning is not there, what to say of fire. The realizations are all around “that” and “its” light shines everything (all knowledge), dispelling the darkness in the form of ignorance – that’s how Upanishads explain the realization of *Atman*. *Atman* is *Brahman*; the all pervading spirit is also the indwelling one. *Sri Ramakrishna*, the greatest of the mystics of the present age, used to say - *Brahman* is to *jnani*s is what *Atman* is to *Yogi*s and *Bhagavan* or *Iswara* or God is to the devotees. The three entities are same.

Through the *jnana* generated by the principles of negating the material world also the *Atman* can be perceived. The *Yoga* whose end state is *Samadhi* is also possible through the control of inner forces, body and mind using the eight steps of assuming the tranquil state, controlling of senses, assuming a proper posture, controlling of the vital forces or *prana*, withdrawal (of mind and senses) from material world, fixing mind on one subject (object of knowledge), constant meditation on that (like uninterrupted flow of oil), and finally *Samadhi* or merging into the Supreme bliss through the dissolution of ego. At this state one perceives the *Atman* or the Self as the same as the *Brahman* or the Supreme Being. Through desire less action, mind gets purified. As the mind becomes purer and purer, the *Atman* begins to reflect on it just as a bright sun reflects in a clear pool of water when the silt in it is removed.

The knowledge of *Atman* leads one to perceive that the indwelling spirit or *Purusha*, the Self, is different and distinct from the body mind which is conditioned by the nature and its attributes and qualities (*Prakrti* and *Guna*).

Others, without knowing this, reflect on this upon hearing from others (*Guru* or the realized soul) and worship it. They, the hearers, are also able to conquer death.

The realization can be obtained through a *Guru* or a realized soul, who can impart the knowledge to the disciples who are eager to learn. By listening and through constant worship or devotion one is able to achieve the same state. This proves that *jnana*, *yoga*, *karma* and *Bhakti* all lead to the same end state, that of realization. Through *Bhakti* one is able to realize the divine

Lord, with or without form, as inseparable from the all pervading cosmic spirit *Brahman* and the indwelling *Atman*.

All the objects in the material world, mobile like human beings and animals, birds, insects etc. and immobile like trees, flowers, fountains, rivers, oceans, mountains etc. have all been born through the union of the *Prakrti* with the cosmic soul or the *Purusha*. *Prakrti* cannot exist independently and without *Prakrti*, *Purusha* is inactive. Therefore the union of *Shiva* and *Sakti* or *Prakrti* and *Purusha* is responsible for all creation.

### **PURUSHA PRAKRTI AND ATMAN**

At this stage one may ask the relation between the Field, the knower of the Field, and these new concepts of *Prakrti* and *Purusha*. Why did the Lord introduce these new concepts while explaining about the differences between *Kshetra* and *Kshetrajna*? The answer is simple. All fields or *Kshetras* are under *Prakrti*'s sway and *Kshetrajna* or the knower of the field is none but the eternal witness, the *Atman* or the *Purusha* who, even though absolute and one, manifests as multiple forms in the Universe as individual souls or indwelling spirit. *Sankhya* principles admit this multiplicity but the doctrine fails to consider the unity behind multiplicity. *Vedanta* postulates this grand unity and holds that the multiplicity is under the modification of the realm of the *Prakrti*, which it terms as *Maya* or the delusive power which hides the Supreme Being from being realized by individuals. The *Prakrti* or *Maya* is also called *Shakti* in *Tantra* and *Brahman* is called *Shiva*.

The *Iswara* or the Supreme Lord resides in everything (as the indwelling spirit) or as the all pervading *Brahman*. *Brahman* modified by attributes (i.e. in union with nature but still as the highest being, not under the sway of *Maya*) is *Iswara*, one who is able to create, preserve and destroy. Therefore *Brahman* is *Iswara*. One who sees the eternal or immortal in the mortals is the real seer.

One who sees the *Iswara* in all beings cannot injure the Self by the action of the Self and therefore attains the highest state.

The *Iswara* is *Atman*. One who realizes the *Atman*, the eternal and unchangeable one, without birth and death, as different from the body

mind which are subjected to destruction and decay, is the real knower of all knowledge. Such a person knows that every being is a manifestation of the *Brahman* or that every being is *Iswara*, the quantum of manifestation being different, being decided by the modification of the nature. In a great soul who has transcended the world the manifestation is very high, while in ordinary mortals it is lower (or shrouded by ignorance). In a human being it is decidedly higher than that of animals or insects. However the Lord resides in all. One who realizes that cannot injure any being, because that will amount to injuring the Lord or the Self. One cannot injure one Self. That explains the principle of non violence advocated by such great souls. One who cannot injure anybody in thought, speech and action knowing that everybody is *Iswara*, is the epitome of the non violence principle. One who does not injure anybody having realized the divinity of all, thus attains the highest state (of union with God).

The nature is performing all actions using its qualities or *Gunas*. One who knows this, also knows the Self or the *Atman* as the non doer or the witness.

*Atman* is inactive because it is *Brahman*. It is a witness but above all actions. All actions are performed by an individual under the influence of *Prakrti* and its modifications. One who thus realizes (*Prakrti* as the performer and *Purusha* as the inert/inactive agent and the individual as the instrument of *Prakrti*), realizes the inactive and non doer *Atman*. The *Atman* being non doer is not responsible for the fruits of actions. So also is an individual who knows the Self or the *Atman*. As the Self that individual is also a non doer and is therefore not bound by the actions (of *Prakrti*). Therefore the individual is liberated from the fetters of the world.

One who realizes all these different manifestations as part or whole of a grand Unity which has divided itself into many, one realizes the Supreme Being or the *Brahman*.

The Supreme Being is the Unity from where everything originates and everything dissolves into. According to *Advaita* principles, the differentiation that is perceived is apparent, just as a real sun reflects in many millions of droplets of water as the apparent sun or the reflection.



The differentiation is on account of the modification under the influence of *Maya*. According to the *Visistadvaita* principles, the One has become many and therefore all things are parts of that Whole or One. Thus from different angles the Unity is the truth. It may have either differentiated itself really or apparently, as per whatever viewpoints one would like to hold.

That is Infinite, that is devoid of all qualities of nature or *gunas*, which is called the *Paramatman* or the great cosmic spirit. It resides in the body as the indwelling spirit but itself does nothing, nor does it get attached (to any action or its fruits).

Therefore even if the individual performs an action, thinks itself as the doer and desires the fruit, its *Atman* is untainted by either the desire or the action. The nature propels it to act, deludes it into believing that its body and mind combination is the real self or identifies and obfuscates the Self or the *Atman* through the world bewitching power of *Maya*. Therefore the individual is bound by the action and falls into the trap of the cycle of life and death.

Just as the infinite space, in the form of that subtlety which is all pervading, does not get attached to the container in which it is encapsulated, the *Atman*, which in reality is all pervading (being the same as the Supreme Being or the *Brahman* which is all pervading), is not attached to the body in which it dwells.

Just as one sun brightens up the entire welkin of this world, the One Supreme Being or the *Kshetri* is the knower of all fields or *Kshetras*. *Atman* is all pervading, therefore one who knows that *Atman*, knows everything else, just as by knowing the clay one can know all pots made up of clay. Verily a knower of *Atman* becomes equivalent to the Supreme Being in terms of knowledge because Supreme Knowledge is Supreme Being itself.

One who thus realizes this distinction between a *Kshetra* and *Kshetri* through the vision of knowledge or *jnana*, and the nature of the individuals (*Prakrti*) as distinct from the knowledge of liberation (*Atman* or *Purusha*), attains the supreme state.





## CHAPTER 14: THE DISTINCTION OF THE THREE GUNAS

*Sri Krishna* said, “Let Me now again impart a very great wisdom to you, which is the very best of all knowledge. By knowing this the sages have achieved perfection. By the aid of this knowledge, whoever comes to acquire My nature (i.e. going beyond the qualities), that person is never born again in any creation, nor is he destroyed during universal destruction or *Pralaya*.

“My source of creation is the manifestation of *Brahman* called great *Prakrti*. It is impregnated with the seeds of creation, from which all beings arise. The great *Prakrti* or the superior Nature gives birth to all creatures emanating from all sources, and I am the donor of the seeds of creation.”

The primary source of creation is the eternal Nature or the unmanifest from which everything springs up and into which everything dissolves. This is the source wherefrom the five primal elements come up and these elements combine to create all bodies – subtle or gross. Therefore the *Mahat Prakrti* or the great *Prakrti* is the mother, the womb wherefrom all creation emerges. The seed of this creation is however the desire to create or project and that is provided by the *Iswara* or the Supreme Being. The creation is really the projection of the *Atman* or the Supreme Being as manifestation of the many forms with the help of *Prakrti* which is also the *Mahamaya* or the great delusive force. The creation or the projection of the *Atman* into many forms is like the seeds of the father being sown in the fertile womb of the mother to procreate, driven by the desire to have progeny.

According to the scriptures, from unmanifest (causal) emerges *Mahat* or cosmic intelligence, also called *Hiranyagarbha* (golden egg), from cosmic intelligence emerges *Ahamkar* or cosmic ego, from cosmic ego emerge the subtle essences (*Tanmatras*), from the subtle emerge the gross five elements. A combination of the gross five elements in different proportions gives rise to all created objects.

“Sattva, Rajas, Tamas are the threefold qualities arising from the Mother Nature. These three are used for binding the Self in the body.”

In order to sustain the creation the divine sparks which have flown from the great fire, the projection of the Self into myriads of the beings, the grand cosmic illusion, it is necessary to bind the *Atman* into the body and start the wheel of action or *Karma*, so that even upon destruction of the bodies, the *Atman* continues to remain in bondage, till, atlast, it finds a way out of the maze of the world. That “way out” is obtained by attaining the divine knowledge or wisdom, that there exists only one Truth, i.e. called God, everything else is transient and therefore unreal. For this, the individual needs to know itself, i.e. it needs to break its identification with the body that it assumes. Until that happens, the Mother Nature continues to educate it to facilitate the soul’s journey towards this eternal knowledge and the fountain of bliss. This is represented as divine play by the dualists and “*Maya*” or delusion by the monists. Once the education is complete, Mother opens her arms and the beings realize their divinity and unity with the Supreme Being and attain emancipation from the bondage. The bondage is perpetuated by the three qualities. One of these qualities always dominates over the others and determines the inherent nature of the being, although these qualities are present in various proportions.

### **GUNAS AND THEIR TRAITS**

“Among these qualities, *Sattva* is pure, transparent and devoid of the darkness of ignorance. It binds one to joy and knowledge. *Rajas* is composed of selfish attachment, which arises from desire (of possession). It binds one to activity (arising out of passion). *Tamas* is born of ignorance; know it to be delusive in all beings. It binds one to errors and delusion, slothfulness and dullness or daze (unmindful of the harsh realities of life or a deliberate avoidance of duties).”

*Sattva*, the foremost of the three qualities, is related to happiness. It brings one nearer to the joy of a perfect knowledge but itself cannot bring emancipation or the true bliss. It reveals the path but cannot lead one to the ultimate goal (of God realization or realization of the *Atman*). It is transparent and is the quality of those who are pure in thoughts, speech and action. Therefore it is the most desirable of the qualities. A *Sattvik* person is happy, takes pleasure in acquiring divine wisdom, never gives in to passion and maintains a purity of life, devoid of any luxury or material

desires. A *Sattvik* person is often selfless, compassionate, has few possessions, is not overly anxious, is dependent on God, does not indulge in luxury and takes pleasure in simplicities, takes great pleasure in all activities which direct him or her towards God, like worship, meditation or prayer, is devoid of ego or pride, is tranquil and composed. He is non violent and peaceful. He does not initiate any activity but if forced into one, performs it with utmost sincerity, devotion and efficiency.

*Rajasik* person on the other hand is driven by passion. He is angry, jealous, has a great deal of pride, sometimes arrogant, lustful, sometimes cruel and vengeful, attached to luxuries, shows off any good deed like charities, always expects return for a favor, has many desires for name, fame, fortune, family. All his acts are driven by some motive of gain. He is full of actions and all activities are rooted in desire. Therefore he is attached to all his possessions and activities.

A *Tamasik* person is at the other end from a *Sattvik*. He is slothful, prone to anger and cruelty, lazy, hates activities, even for the sake of self improvement, is always after fulfillment of sensory pleasures by the easiest means, and blames everybody else for all evils and ills which are brought on himself by his own actions. He is thus a great nuisance to the society as he brings about destruction, unhappiness and misery on himself and on others. He is thus driven purely by ignorance of material as well as spiritual pursuits and sustains on whatever is readily and easily available, without much effort or pain. He is full of jealousy, hatred, contempt and such other vices. Fear is also a key driver of the *Tamasik*.

“*Sattva* nature predominates by mastering over the other two, *Rajas* dominates by controlling *Sattva* and *Tamas*, *Tamas* again predominates by controlling *Rajas* and *Sattva*.”

In a normal human being, *Sattva* serves as a balance between *Rajas* and *Tamas*. If one of these two predominates, that determines the fundamental nature of the person. Predominance of *Sattva* leads to peace and spiritual wealth, as found in monasteries and holy places. *Rajas* leads to material prosperity but also brings unhappiness in its wake. A dominance of *Rajas* may lead to violence and warfare as one tends to dominate over others out

of passion and thirst for more possessions and power. An excess of *Tamas* leads to a decline and downfall. It brings in its wake untold miseries, cruelty, degradation of material and spiritual wealth, corruption and bitter feuds.

“When in every inlet of a certain body the signs of wisdom appear, know that *Sattva* has taken birth. When greed & passion take over and certain restlessness and desire dominates every endeavor of activities, know that *Rajas* has taken control. When ignorance and lack of enthusiasm, delusion and dullness dominates, know for sure that *Tamas* has taken firm grip. If *Sattva* dominates when the body perishes, the being reaches a higher and better state of purity. A *Rajasik*, on the other hand, upon death, attains attachment to *Karma* (and therefore falls under the repeated cycles of birth and death), while a *Tamasik*, on dying, attains an inferior birth (often as animals or other inferior forms).”

The state of the being during its life determines its state after death. If purity is pursued, as is the case with a *Sattvik*, it gets to stay on a purer state even after death and therefore attains to high end. *Rajasik* state makes one attain the same state after death, i.e. one gets ensnared in the mesh of the worldly affairs and the associated miseries. A *Tamasik* can only expect a lower state after death because its mind and intelligence are not high enough. Thus *Karma* or action is determined by nature and its qualities, which decides the fate or afterlife.

“The good *Sattvik* accomplishments of pure hearted souls result in holiness. *Rajasik* work results in miseries while *Tamasik* work brings ignorance and delusion.

From *Sattva* is born joy or bliss, from *Rajas* lust, from *Tamas* are born delusion and dullness, along with ignorance.

The one established in *Sattva* goes upward, while that one in *Rajas* remains where he is. With inferior qualities, a person established in *Tamas* goes downward.”

Anything pure, holy, blissful, joyous, tranquil, wise, simple, compassionate will naturally result in a sound development of mental and spiritual faculties, thereby leading to purer understanding of subtle things. Bliss is the natural result of purity. A pure soul is devoid of passions and thereby cultivates all good things like unselfishness, courage, conviction, sincerity, steadfastness, faith, simplicity. A person driven by ego, passion, lust and greed is naturally overcome by the vagaries of life. Such a person has many desires and unfulfilled desires lead to miseries. Lust is the natural outcome of passion – thirst for power, name, fame, fortune corrupts a soul and makes him attached to the world. *Sattva* helps one get elevated from the mundane worldly affairs to outwardly experience of joy and bliss. Therefore the inclination of a pious soul is naturally upwards. A *Rajasik* person is bound by lust and passion and therefore stays as he is, attached to his world and suffering in consequence many miseries. A *Tamasik* is the most unfortunate. His ignorance leads him to commit one folly after another until he brings complete destruction on himself and thereby falls from grace.

### TRANSCENDING THREE GUNAS

“When one witnesses the fact that none other than the *Gunas* is the doer, by knowing the Supreme entity beyond the *Gunas*, one attains the ideal called Me. By transcending the realms of the *Gunas* arising out of the needs of the body mind (i.e. the very nature itself), the individual, being emancipated from the cycles of life and death, decay and sickness (i.e. the need to get a new body and get captured in the cycle of rebirth), attains Me.”

A realized soul knows that he is not the doer; it is his nature that is compelling him to do everything. A deluded ignorant soul on the other hand knows himself to be the doer and does not believe himself to be the witness and the body mind to be instrument of the nature. One who attains this knowledge has either realized the Supreme Truth through the path of knowledge or is a great devotee to have realized his personal God. Therefore he is emancipated in this very life and sorrows and miseries arising from birth, death, old age and sickness cannot get the better of him.

*Sri Ramakrishna* said by the help of a parable - the three gunas - *Sattva*, *rajas* and *Tamas* - have men under their control. ... The three *gunas* are so many

robbers. *Tamas* kills and *rajas* binds. *Sattva* no doubt releases man from his bondage, but it cannot take him to God. It shows him the way."

*Arjuna* asked the most natural question that comes up in our mind as well, "How can one master over the *Gunas*? What does he do to get out of the clutches of the three *Gunas*?"

*Sri Krishna* answers, "One who is not perturbed under any of the three states of knowledge, activity and delusion, neither is he dejected when under the influence of any of them, nor is he desirous when not under the influence of one of them, is one who has overcome the *Gunas* and therefore the nature. He is dispassionate, detached and is never agitated by the *Gunas*. He knows the *Gunas* (and nature) to be separate from himself and that *Guna* is the one that performs all the activities, not the individual self. He is never dislodged from the fact that he is not the doer. He accepts both pleasure and pain with equal composure, treats gold, earth and stone in the same light and abides in the *Atman*. He does not make any distinction between favorite and non favorite, i.e. he does not favor anything over others or dislikes others. He is tranquil, calm and composed. He treats praise and blame in the same light. He is not concerned about honor or dishonor, i.e. treats them equally, does not distinguish between enemies and friends i.e. to him there are neither friends, nor enemies. He does not begin any selfish action voluntarily. Such a person is said to have transcended the three *gunas*."

It is very essential to understand what a person is like who has transcended the nature. To go beyond the nature's quality is akin to have a complete mastery over the nature. This is possible only for a realized soul. For ordinary mortals going beyond the nature is not possible as nature is much more powerful than him and he is a hapless victim of his own nature. However he does not realize that. He is a slave of his passions, environment, work, family, worries, hobbies, basic instincts and so on. Therefore he is never free. On the other hand, one who has transcended the *gunas* is free in this very life. Such a person knows the difference between the *Atman* or *Purusha* which is the witness and the nature which is the performer. He knows that mind and body with the senses exist as an instrument of the nature. He is therefore never disturbed if the body or



mind is affected; say by old age or sickness or miseries. To him money is as useless as stone or lump of clay. He has no worldly desire or expectation. He survives till the momentum of the past actions whose fruits have materialized (*Prarabdha karma*) lasts, allowing the nature to perform the bodily functions. He does not have friends or enemies because he knows that he is everybody and everybody is the same *Atman* that he is. One cannot be one's own friend or enemy. So he has no special preference or dislike for any person or any thing. He does not care about any worldly praise or blame, sorrows or happiness as he knows them all to be transitory and therefore meaningless to the *Atman* which is eternal.

The above description is the path of the *jnana* or knowledge. *Sri Krishna* now says that a devotee can also transcend the *gunas*. "If one serves Me with complete devotion, the *bhaktiyoga*, he also goes beyond the three *gunas* and attain the *Brahman*, the Supreme Being."

It is not that the *gunas* can be transcended only through the path of knowledge. One can go beyond them through a great form of *Bhakti* which draws the Lord closer to the devotee. The devotee will have to offer his heart and soul to the Lord and will not depend on the world for anything. Only when material universe is completely rejected, the spiritual universe unfolds itself. Thus through the grace of the Lord, the devotee can attain the same highest state as obtained by the *jnani* through Self Realization.

The Lord says, "I am the establisher of the *Brahman*, the Supreme Being, the eternal and immortal one, which is also the eternal virtue and the Supreme Bliss."

The *Brahman* is called as "existence-consciousness-bliss" in the *Vedas*. The Supreme Lord is the only eternal truth. He is also the very essence of all virtue and hence He is the consciousness, as virtue originates in consciousness which is also the wisdom, and vice resides in ignorance, i.e. lack of consciousness. He has no birth or decay and therefore He is existence for ever. He is the supreme joy, all material pleasures are nothing in comparison to that great joy of infinite where there is no sorrow and no delusion and where the world with all its miseries and pairs of opposites



dissolves away. That state is only achieved after transcending the nature and its qualities, the *gunas*.

## CHAPTER 15: THE SUPREME BEING (PURSUSHOTTAMA)

Lord *Krishna* said, “There is said to be one giant eternal *Asvattha* (banyan) tree, which is upside turned, i.e. its roots are heavenwards while the branches are towards the earth. The *Vedas* are the leaves of this tree and one who knows this (the truth about the allegory of the tree) is called a knower of the *Veda* (*Rishi*). The branches are spread both upwards and downwards. They are nourished and enhanced by the *Gunas* or the qualities of the nature and the objects of the senses are its new leaves and twigs. The roots find their way downwards and are the causes of the *Karma* or the activities in the human world.”

The *Asvattha* or the sacred banyan tree finds its way in *Gita* again. In Chapter 10 the Lord, while explaining His various manifestations had said that He is the *Asvattha* among the trees. He now compares the entire creation with a giant, eternal *Asvattha* tree which is turned upside down, with its roots facing heavenwards and branches towards the earth. However the roots also slope downward and the branches are also spread upwards and the leaves comprise of the *Vedas* or the accumulated knowledge. The source of all actions lies in the roots.

There are many desires in human lives – that of earning merits and going to the heaven, that of earning name, fame, fortune, possessing sons and daughters, friends and relatives, beauty, grace, knowledge, scholarship, success, satisfaction, power, welfare, happiness, sensual pleasures etc. The list is endless. Such desires are the many roots which are the sources of all activities. The desires are the mainstay of the creation and are therefore the roots while the world and its affairs are the many branches. Upwards is the heaven and downwards is the earth. Therefore the desires for heaven which are driven by the many rites and rituals as prescribed in the *Vedas*, the leaves, spread upwards while those for the worldly pleasures are tilted downwards. The branches (world) also consist of the heaven because even heavenly enjoyments are transient. After the expiration of the enjoyments based on *Karma* even the gods fall down to earth to reap the fruit. This tree with its branches and roots are fed by the Nature and its qualities and the many sense objects. The desire increases with the increase of the objects of

senses and so also the worldly affairs. The *Gunas* or the quality of nature helps in expanding the working of the tree through its binding effect and through perpetuation of the *Karma* rooted in the desires.

“Such a form is not realized here in this world. Nobody knows where it begins or ends or where its foundation lies. Such a tree with very strong roots has to be forcefully cut by the weapons of dispassion and detachment.”

Nobody knows where the world begins or where it ends. The entire universe with all its realms is contained in the creation. Nobody also knows the source from which the world/creation originates. However to get liberated from the world, one will have to use the weapons of discrimination and detachment and strike at the roots, i.e. all the desires. Thus getting rid of the world, one will be able to obtain everlasting peace. This is the path of knowledge or *jnana*.

#### SCIENCE OF REALIZATION OF THE DIVINE

“Probe that great Truth, by taking shelter of which one would not return (to this world). I take refuge in that ancient *Purusha* from whom all the endeavors (of action) have originated in the past.”

Another way to get emancipated from this great tree of *samsara* or the world is to take the path of devotion. One would need the grace of the Supreme Lord who is the Absolute Truth. Then only one would be able to tear asunder the fetters of actions. Taking refuge is a way of obtaining the grace through the path of *Bhakti*.

By alluding to endeavors the Lord also proclaims the glory of selfless action as another path to attain the emancipation. Through selfless action one gets rid of the impurities and the latent impressions. On a clear and pure mind the Truth reflects just as the sun reflects brightly on a clear pool of water.

“A person devoid of ego and delusion, free from all attachments, steadfast in spiritual practices, bereft of all desires, liberated from the pairs of

opposites like pleasures and pain, gets to the eternal feet of that (Supreme Being)."

This is the path of *Yoga* – the eightfold principle like *Yama*, *Niyama* etc. Through *Yoga* steps one is able to become free of pairs of opposites and attain the highest state called *Samadhi*, where gets rid of the desires and ego and becomes completely free of all delusion and attachment.

"The sun does not shine there, nor the moon, nor the fire. From where one never returns is the great abode of Mine."

In the state of *Samadhi* the universe with its origin in the mind and the ego, is extinct. Only the Supreme Being exists and it is He who is perceived everywhere. The ignorance is completely dispelled and the Truth that shines bright is He. Therefore the divine light is the only light that can remove delusion.

The Lord further stated that all the living beings in the world are His parts eternally, just as a great fire sends across divine sparks as long as it is burning. The mind and the senses established in the Nature act upon all such living beings and thereby delude them in forgetting their inherent divinity.

When the entity within, who is the Self or the divine spark, the same Supreme Lord who is the eternal *Brahman*, gets a new body or leaves a body, it carries with it the mind and the senses, just as the wind carries the fragrance from the objects.

The life forces, while leaving the body, at the time of death, carry with them the subtle body comprising the mind, mind stuff (*Chitta*), ego and intellect.

"In leaving (a body), while staying (within a body), while enjoying (the sense objects through the senses), when modified by the qualities of the Nature (*Sattva*, *Rajas*, *Tamas* and the associated character formation), the deluded ones are unable to see it. Only the wise can see it."

The *Atman* cannot be seen by everybody. It is only realized through the knowledge acquired through direct realization. So those who are able to realize the *Atma*, know that the *Atman* is distinct from the body or the mind and the senses, and that the *Atman* is a witness to all actions. The *Atman* with the subtle body and causal body leaves the gross body at the time of death, and the individual enjoys the pleasures and pain under the influence of the nature and its qualities and not the *Atman*.

The *Yogi* who is realized, through his endeavors, is able to realize the *Atman* in the individual self (as distinct from body and mind). The non discriminating person, who is not realized, even though he endeavors, is unable to see the *Atman* as distinct from the body and mind.

*Sri Krishna* further said, “Know that brightness which shines forth from the sun and illuminates this entire universe, the brightness in the moon and that in the fire, are all Mine. I enter into the worlds and sustain all beings with the help of My *ojas* or the mental faculty. I nourish the herbs by being the *Soma*, who contains the ambrosia or the sustaining force for all herbs. I become the fire in the body which digests all forms of food using the life forces called *Prana* and *Apana*. I am everything. Dwelling in the heart, from Me originate memory, knowledge and wisdom and even their destruction. I am all the *Vedas*; I am the object of all knowledge. I am the author of *Vedanta* and the knower of all *Vedas*.”

Everything shines with the help of One thing. Even though the moon shines with the light of the sun, the sun itself shines with the help of its own fuel. Even though modern science proves that the fuel inside the sun is responsible for the combustion and the energy that contributes towards its brightness, if we regress further we can see that every element in the world has its source in the One that itself has become the world. Therefore it is the grand unity that pervades everything, the Supreme Being, which is behind the light of the sun, the moon, the fire. It is said that the moon’s rays help in the nourishment of the herbs and develop medicinal qualities in them. The herbs thus draw their energy from moon just as plants draw their energy from sun to manufacture chlorophyll. Therefore the same grand unity which contributes towards the light of the moon, permeates the herbs in the form of the energy derived from the moon. The world is

made up from that One and the Supreme Being holds the entire world as if through the great inner prowess that it possesses, called *ojas*. The nourishment of all bodies is basically the nourishing of the indweller. It is as if we are offering some oblation into the great sacrifice inside our body, to the indwelling spirit who in the form of the presiding deity of the sacrifice accepts the offering, with the aid of various vital forces in the body. The Supreme Being is the source of all knowledge. *Vedas* are the accumulation of knowledge. They are not some books as some would believe them to be. Therefore one who is the source of *Vedas* is also a knower of the *Vedas*, i.e. all the knowledge in the Universe. The Supreme Being as the *Atman* is located in that secret and mysterious place behind the body and mind, called heart. As *Brahman* it is everything and pervades everywhere. All knowledge, memory, wisdom and even the dissolution of these, originate from it. It is therefore the knower, knowledge and the object of the knowledge. It is the author of the *Upanishads* and other sacred texts which have been revealed to the great sages.

There are two types of *Purusha* in these worlds, one is perishable (all the living beings) and the other imperishable (the creator, *Brahma* or the *Hiranyagarbha*, who is eternal and therefore beyond the realms of the material world). However there is one greatest entity which is beyond all pairs of opposites like perishable and imperishable, which cannot be described by any particular state or attribute, who is also known as the great *Atman* as distinct from individual body souls or *Atman*. This state (*Brahman* or the Supreme Being), enters into the three worlds as *Iswara* and preserves the worlds and their denizens eternally. The Supreme Being is beyond attributes and beyond quality. Therefore it cannot perform any function or action. As *Iswara* or the Supreme Lord, however, it acquires a state and thereby performs actions for creating, preserving and destroying the worlds.

*Sri Krishna* said, "Since I am beyond the perishable and also greater than the imperishable *Hiranyagarbha* or the *Iswara* with quality, therefore I am known as *Purushottama* or the greatest *Purusha* in the worlds and in the *Vedas*."

The Supreme Being, being devoid of attributes and qualities is greater than *Iswara*, who is its modified form, the modification being on account of the quality of Nature or the *guna*. The *Iswara* with *Rajas* creates, that with *Sattva* preserves and that with *tamas* destroys. However this trinity is a perceived one as behind them it is the same unity that is performing all three functions, being modified by the particular quality of nature and these three functions are not unrelated but rather inherently linked on the grand cosmic scale. But because of this modification, *Iswara* is one notch below *Brahman* who is beyond any modification or the influence of the *gunas* of the nature. Therefore the Supreme Being is *Purushottama* – the greatest of all *Purushas*, including the individual souls and the cosmic trinity.

“The non deluded one, who knows Me to be the *Purushottama*, that knower of all worships Me in everything. This is a very mysterious and secret knowledge that I have imparted to you, oh innocent one. By knowing this, the intelligent one is fulfilled (nothing else remains to know or do for him).”



## CHAPTER 16: THE DIVINE AND DEMONIAL TRAITS

The Lord now began to narrate the different divine traits. He said that fearlessness, purity of intellect, being established in yoga of knowledge or *jnana*, charity, controlling of senses, sacrifices, study of the scriptures, ascetic practices, transparency and honesty, non violence, Truth, controlling passions like anger, renunciation, peace, aversion to fault finding, compassion in all beings, absence of greed, gentleness, modesty, determination, vigor, mercy, fortitude, purity, freedom from envy, freedom from egoism, are the different divine characters.

Pride, egotism, conceit, anger, cruelty, ignorance are the demoniac traits.

*Sri Krishna* said, "The divine traits liberate while the demoniac ones bind." As if to reassure *Arjuna* on this front, the Lord further added, "Do not worry oh *Pandava*, you have been born with divine traits. There are two types of created beings – *daiva* and *asura*, the divine and the demoniacs. I have spoken enough about the divine traits. Now hear about the demoniac traits (so that you stay free from them)."

The demoniacal persons do not know where to draw a line between engaging in pleasures and refraining from them, i.e. their enjoyment and attachment to sense pleasures know no bound. They do not have purity (internal and external), nor do they adhere to ritualistic disciplines (like performing the sacrifices necessary for a householder), nor do they adhere to truth.

They are established in untruth and think that the world is devoid of any Supreme Being, i.e. they are non believers. The world according to them is driven by sensual pleasures and materialism. Desire is the essence which drives their world.

With such a (skewed) viewpoint, such disruptors of the world peace, out of limited intellect and foolish understanding, accomplish great evil. Out of pride, vanity and egotism, being deluded by big desires and lust (for name, fame, power and fortune), such unholy ones take to accomplish evil works.

Many such souls have been known in the history of mankind who have perpetrated extreme violence out of their lust for power and fame, killed and conquered many, but ultimately they all have been lost in the vortex of time. Their infamy lasted but not their works. Extreme lust and desire is thus a key demoniacal trait. Such persons are also devoid of any regard for God. Even those who profess to believe in Him do not know Him in the true sense as they subscribe only to some sectarian dogmas in most cases and therefore do not hesitate to eliminate others who do not believe in such dogmas. In reality they follow their own egos although they profess to believe in God, because they want everybody else to believe in their own ideology.

They have many worries which they nourish until their deaths. They are attached to sense enjoyments and know nothing beyond material world. They are bound by many wrong doings, being wrathful and lustful. They always wish to earn fortune for satiating their lust, even by unjust means.

“This is what I get today; this is how I shall fulfill my desire. This I have, I’ll obtain this other one (by unfair means). That enemy has been destroyed by me; I’ll destroy others as well. I am the Lord, the enjoyer, the successful, the powerful, the happy one.” These are some of the thoughts of the person of such traits. They are selfish and greedy. They do not know anything beyond satisfying their own ego and greed, increasing their own power and wealth and adding to their name and fame.

“I have many relations, who is there in the world like me? I shall perform sacrifices (for showing off), I shall donate (out of egoism and contempt for others), I shall enjoy (for eternity).” These are some of the notions that a person of demoniac trait wrongfully possess. He is deluded by his many thoughts as the lust drives him to think of many plans to satisfy his selfish desires, thereby increasing his worries and anxieties (when the desires remain unfulfilled or they are obstructed). They are extremely attached to lustful enjoyments and thereby suffer in hell.

The minds of such persons are veritable hell. They suffer on account of their own actions. A thief or a murderer cannot be in peace, because his sense of guilt and fear will drive him unconsciously. He is always afraid of

getting caught, of losing everything. Similarly a person with many evil thoughts and deeds is never in peace. He is always afraid, lest he should lose all his wealth and power as he has many enemies. Sensory enjoyments are fleeting and can bring him momentary pleasure but they are all lost once they end and such a person looks for more enjoyments. He is never satisfied as desire cannot be quenched by the fulfillment of desire. Just as the fire always gets bigger when fuel is added to it, desire increases in proportion to the enjoyments. So also the avarice and greed increase in proportion to the possessions.

They are obsessed with themselves, are vain, engrossed with their material possessions and think highly of themselves, their fame and wealth. Even when they perform sacrifices, they do it for the sake of name only, i.e. never appreciate the true spirit of sacrifices. Through sacrifices they only want greater power, greater name and fame and they do not care to follow the injunctions of the scriptures (*Vedas*).

Egotism, might, pride, lust, wrath etc. are their chief characteristics. They injure the Supreme Lord as the Self dwelling in other bodies out of spite, through their hatred and violent acts on others.

Since they cannot see beyond fulfilling their own selfish interests and desires, they are contemptuous about others who are not their favorites. They neither respect nor pay homage to those who are honest, truthful and virtuous. Therefore they actually deride God who is the personification of Truth, justice and honesty and virtue.

*Sri Krishna* said, "I throw such hateful and sinful, the wretches of the three worlds, among the demoniac creations time and again. Such demons and deluded souls, fail to get Me in successive births and thereby wander in the world, suffering from miseries, death and decay."

God is not vengeful. On the contrary He is the epitome of compassion. Even though the above assertion looks like a wrathful statement and leads one to wonder about God's intention, in actual practice what He means is that the karma or the actions of the demoniacs lead them to hellish conditions. They suffer on account of their own work, not because God is

angry. They suffer in order that they are cleansed of the accumulated dirt as suffering and misery can quickly lead to redemption. Their pride and ego take a beating and thus in a later life the manifestation of divinity in them becomes greater. Such miserable condition is thus a necessary prescription for evolving from a demon to a demigod. The demoniac traits are like dirt on the clear mirror of the Self. Unless that dirt is removed using the cleansing agent called misery and sorrow, the inner divinity cannot manifest itself.

The Lord further added that there are three types of gateways to hell in the world – Lust, Anger and Greed. Therefore one needs to keep away from these three. Free from such dark passions, men of good nature perform great activities and therefore attain the highest ends. Those who, out of desire and lust disregard the scriptural injunctions, they neither have happiness nor do they attain the higher states. Therefore one should always perform acts in consonance with the injunctions of the scriptures which clearly delineate between what are to be done and what are not to be done.

Scriptures are guidebooks in the path of virtue. One who disregards scriptures because of arrogance naturally falls prey to evil tendencies and therefore forsakes virtue. All scriptures for instance agree on virtuous actions – non violence, absence of anger, jealousy, hatred, leading a moral and ideal life, looking after old and sick, taking care of the society, selfless actions, being satisfied with legally earned wealth etc. People of demoniac tendencies however disregard most or all of these injunctions as they follow only their own ego. Thus in consequence they suffer. Those who, however, follow such an ideal life, attain the highest ends. Arjuna, out of pity, was about to forsake his duty which has been laid down by the scriptures, that of fighting the enemy who has taken his belongings. If he gave in to his impulses (of pity) he would be performing a demoniac act, even though he himself is of divine quality. Therefore the Lord made him aware of the shortcomings of the desire that he was cherishing.

## CHAPTER 17: THE THREEFOLD SRADDHA

*Arjuna* asked *Sri Krishna*, “Those who disregard the scriptures but worship with devotion and dedication (*Sraddha*), what faith do they process, Oh *Krishna*?”

The previous chapter concluded with *Sri Krishna*’s assertion that one who disregards the scriptures driven by arrogance and desire, does not attain happiness or virtuous end. Therefore *Arjuna*’s doubt is concerning those who, despite not knowing the scriptures, worship the Supreme Being with complete devotion and dedication. They may be illiterate, ignorant but not arrogant. They may even be of such high spirituality that whatever they do becomes scriptural injunction themselves. Therefore *Sri Krishna* further explained the distinction He made.

He said that there are three types of *Sraddha*, coming under the modifications of the qualities of nature, like everything else. One is *Sattviki*, second one is *Rajasi* and the third one is *Tamasi*. These are driven by the nature of the individual who possesses the *Sraddha*. Everybody’s *Sraddha* is molded according to the character he or she possesses. The individual is composed of *Sraddha* almost entirely and therefore his *Sraddha* will define him.

A *Sattvik* will worship gods and demigods, a *rajasa* will worship *yakshas* and *Rakshas*, the divine creatures who have certain powers at their disposal to fulfill desires immediately. A *Tamasik* will worship ghosts, goblins and demons, because their nature gels well with his.

The above description of the worship of the resp. powers takes stem from the fact that a person of *Sattvik* nature will be attracted towards divinities, who bear an affinity with his own nature. He may not desire anything but may perform all rites according to the injunctions of the scriptures out of love and admiration for the divinities. A *Rajasik* person, on the other hand, owing to being subjected to passions and desires, will try to reach out to semi divinities who resemble his nature. Such entities can fulfill desire readily and are also propitiated readily. They are flesh eaters and like

animal sacrifices and a *Rajasik* person would prefer grand sacrifices with animals to show off to the world that they possess devotion. A *Tamasik* will always attempt something which neither involves a lot of effort, nor a lot of patience and nor dedication. Therefore his *Sraddha* is directed towards the lower powers of the nature who have exactly the same nature as he has and who would be able to assist him in evil designs like causing harm to somebody he hates (*Maran/Uchatan* etc. – the *tantrik* rituals).

To take this point further *Sri Krishna* said, one who indulges in severe ascetic practices in dissonance with the injunctions of the scriptures, driven by pride and arrogance and propelled by desires and attachments, who causes his body to suffer heavily for the sake of such practices and therefore cause injury to the soul, is definitely of demoniac character.

This gives a definite answer to the question posed by *Arjuna*. The disregard for the scripture is not unintentional, nor is ignorance the cause. It is a deliberate attempt to forsake scriptures and practice what one would deem fit, in the process making one's own body, mind and spirit (and probably that of others as well) to suffer violently, is a sure tendency possessed by the demoniacs. They are driven by lust for power, name, fame, fortune. They do not care for the societal norms. In the name of ascetic practices they probably satisfy their own crooked tendencies. Certain characteristics similar to this were observed in the practice of a much degenerated form of *Tantra* called *Vamachara*. In the name of the *Tantric* practices people often would indulge in lustful activities, causing troubles to their body, mind and spirit and thinking all the while that what they were doing were right. They were driven by their own passions and egos. Such worshippers are of *Rajasik* and *Tamasik* type but never of *Sattvik* disposition.

## **PRACTICE OF SRADDHA IN DAILY LIFE**

What are the different traits of these three different forms of *Sraddha* in day to day activities? That is what *Sri Krishna* now explains, to illustrate further the differences.

He says that even their favorite foods are different for people with the three types of nature. They follow different methods towards the three pillars of virtuous lives – sacrifices, spiritual practices and charities.

The foods for a *Sattvik* are typically those which enhance longevity, intellect, health, recovery (from illness), bliss, and happiness. Such foods are by nature juicy, refreshing, stable (good for the body in the long run) and pleasing (to the body and mind).

On the other hand pungent, excessive salty, spicy, sharp (for the stomach), dry (without the juice), burning (excessive spicy, causing a burning sensation in the stomach) foods are the favorites of the *Rajasik* people and they result in miseries and pains (for the body and mind).

What about the *Tamasik*? They take food fit for their nature – food which has been prepared a while ago, whose juices have dried up, stale, decomposed, remnants of food taken by others, foods which cannot be used for sacrifice purpose etc are the foods which a *Tamasik* would partake.

Purity of food is important as according to the belief, food helps in creating blood and therefore food which is naturally pure would help in possessing internal purity. *Sattvik* foods like fruits, roots, milk, ghee, sweetmeats etc. would enhance the *Sattvik* dispensation. Moreover they are healthy in the long run and therefore body as well as mind remains fit for spiritual discipline by eating such foods.

*Rajasik* foods are mostly spicy and hot. One may like them while eating but later they create problems for the body mind and contribute to various stomach ailments in the long run.

*Tamasik* foods are better avoided altogether as they are taken by people with *Tamasik propensity* like the *Chandalas*.

The sacrifices are also of three types according to the nature of the performer. A sacrifice which is performed in line with the scriptural injunctions without desiring any fruit (performed for the sake of performing only, i.e. as a duty of a householder as prescribed in the *Vedas*), with the necessary devotion, is called *Sattvik*.



If one performs sacrifice for the sake of fulfillment of some purpose, like progeny, wealth, heaven etc. or for the sake of pride and ego (i.e. to show one's wealth and power), that sacrifice is called *Rajasik*.

A sacrifice performed without any consideration for the scriptural injunctions, without distribution of the fruits or the *Annam*, one which is devoid of chants and gifts, in which the performer does not possess any faith or devotion is called *Tamasik*.

There are three different forms of ascetic practices or penances. One is bodily, one is through speeches and one is by mind. These are also classified further into three types depending upon the nature of the performer. The bodily penances are worshipping gods, *Brahmins* and other higher castes, Guru, elders, maintaining purity (both internal and external), simplicity and honesty, celibacy or purity in action, and non violence.

The practice of speaking such words that do not cause any stress to the other, that are true, that are nice to hear and that are for the benefit of the others, the study of the scriptures (like reciting the *Vedas* and chanting *Sama*) are called penances through speech.

Having a tranquil mind free from all troubles and anxieties, gentleness, calmness, controlling of passions in the mind like anger, jealousy, hatred, having only pure thoughts are called the penances of the mind.

Performing these three types of penances with devotion and regularity, without any desire for the fruits is called *Sattvik* penance. If one performs such penances for getting some desires fulfilled, for recognition and fame, for status, with pride (of performing a difficult task), one is actually doing a *Rajasik* penance.

The deluded souls who perform penance by torturing themselves or for the sake of causing harm to others (*Tantric* means like *Maran/Uchatan*) are actually doing *Tamasik* penance.

A gift which is given away in the spirit of giving (i.e. giving is a necessity, a scriptural injunction which has to be respected), to somebody from whom

the donor expects no favor, with proper consideration of the time, space and person is called a *Sattvik* Gift.

Some of the very important considerations about gift are whom we are giving, when we are giving and what we are giving. If gifts, for instance, are given to a non deserving person, they bear no fruits or result in no merits. Scriptures recommend gifts to *Brahmins*, poor and needy, monks, destitute etc. A sacrifice may be the best place for giving away and so are temples or holy places. Certain times are more auspicious for gifts than other times, for instance some festivals where everybody, including a poor person should celebrate and the gift enables a poor to take part in festive spirit and share the joy of others. In certain situations gifts are mandatory like famine or drought when a large number of people are suffering. It is the duty of householders, to support others, who are less privileged than him in the society or who are devoted heart and soul to the God. A householder should not expect any return for such contribution either in this world, or next.

A gift that is given expecting some returns (blessings, expectation of merits) or for the sake of the merits of such donations, given away grudgingly (not in the proper spirit) is called *Rajasik* gift.

A donation must be made in proper spirit. It should not be made with an air of superiority. A giver must be humble enough to acknowledge that it is his great fortune to be able to help others with his surplus wealth. A giver is in no way better than a receiver because a receiver does a favor to him by accepting the gifts and enabling him to do a good work and earn merits. However a person with a *Rajasik* faith does not possess enough humility to give away in the right spirit as per injunctions of the scriptures.

A *Tamasik* gift is given at an improper time and place, to a person not fit enough to receive such gift (like giving a pearl necklace to a monkey, or casting pearls before swine as the popular sayings go). Such a gift is given by a person with a *Tamasik* faith and hence performed in a most improper way with contempt and derision and without any respect for the receiver (like throwing coins to a beggar). Such a gift begets no merit.

### THREE SACRED WORDS OF SRADDHA AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCES

*Om Tat Sat*, with these three words *Brahman*, the Supreme Being is remembered. These words denote the Supreme who is formless and devoid of any quality. By these three were ordained the *Brahmins*, the *Vedas* and the Sacrifices in ancient times.

The great sages, who have realized *Brahman*, the Supreme Being, as per the injunctions of the scriptures, utter the word “*Om*” before performing any sacrifices, gifts or penances.

“*Tat*” is the word uttered by the sages who aspire after liberation, before performing sacrifices, giving away in charity and penances, without desiring the fruits of such activities.

“*Sat*”, this word signifies existence as well as virtue. While describing great works the “*Sat*” word is also used.

“*Sat*” is also used to depict a steadiness of purpose, of continuing performing sacrifices, acts of charities and penances. Any work for the sake of “*Tat*” or the *Brahman*, is also called “*Sat*”.

These three instructions – “*Om Tat Sat*” represent the mystical words that denote the imperishable Supreme Being who cannot be described and who cannot be perceived with the senses. These three words are extremely auspicious and therefore a person with the right *Sraddha* will always use these three words before commencing any of the noble acts. “*Om*” is *Pranava*, a very sacred word, used in denoting both the *Vedas* and the Supreme Being. Therefore the every scripture recommends uttering *Om* with utmost devotion before the beginning of any work as that would denote remembrance of the Supreme Being and therefore dedication of the fruits of the work to the God. *Tat* – whose actual mean is “that” is used to signify the *Brahman*. One of the great words of Upanishads is “*Tat Tvam Asi*” or thou art that, implying the inherent divinity in all beings which is shrouded in the thick veil of *Maya*. “*Tat*” therefore directly signifies *Brahman* and any work being done by a person desiring emancipation and not heaven or merit, has to be dedicated to the “*Tat*”. *Sat* means “being”, i.e. existence, the reality. According to *Vedanta*, God is the only reality while the world, according to the *Advaita* theory, is an illusion. *Sat* also means the virtuous and therefore for any virtuous and auspicious work,

the “*Sat*” word can be used. A virtuous person is also steady in any of the three practices – sacrifices, gifts and penances, whatever be the circumstances surrounding him/her. That steadiness is also denoted as “*Sat*”. Any work dedicated towards *Brahman*, i.e. realization of God, like worship, meditation, recitation, sans any desire for the fruits is also *sat*. These three words therefore imply the pinnacle of *Sraddha*.

Any of these three activities (sacrifices, charities and penance), if performed without the necessary *Sraddha* is called *Asat* or non virtuous and therefore does not bring any merit for the performer, neither here nor in any other world.

## CHAPTER 18 - THE YOGA OF EMANCIPATION OR MOKSHA YOGA

*Arjuna* asked *Sri Krishna*, "I wish to know the truth about *Sannyas* (supreme renunciation) and also separately the truth about renunciation in general (*tyaga*), Oh *Rishiksha*!"

*Sri Krishna* said, "The great men call renunciation of actions bearing fruits as supreme renunciation or *Sannyas*, and wise call the renunciation of all fruits of actions as renunciation or *tyaga*."

The difference between these two is extremely subtle. On the one hand we have the renunciation of action itself, which is extremely difficult to achieve. On the other hand we have renunciation of fruits of all actions performed, which is also not easy.

*Sri Krishna* continued, "Some wise men say that all actions should be renounced as the path of actions is faulty, while others say that sacrifice, charity and penances should never be renounced. Hear from Me the certainty about Renunciation, oh the best among *Bharatas*. Renunciation is said to be, oh tiger among men, of three types. (According to Me) One should never renounce the threefold action of sacrifice, charity and penances. These three activities are the purifiers (from sin) for human beings. One should never renounce actions that are to be performed regularly. If anybody forsakes them out of delusion, that renunciation is *Tamasik* or born out of ignorance. If one renounces actions out of fear, sorrow or pain, thinking about the miseries that come in the wake (of performing the actions), one does a *Rajasik* renunciation and does not obtain the merits of renunciation.

On the other hand one who performs actions regularly for the sake of performing them, in a detached spirit, without desiring the fruits, does a *Sattvik* renunciation."

### THREE MODES OF RENUNCIATION OR RELINQUISHING

The Lord now enters into a complete description of the various types of renunciation. Renunciation is the only way to *Moksha* or emancipation. Without renouncing the material world one cannot hope to enter the spiritual realms and be free from the worldliness. *Sri Krishna* says that performing actions is better than inaction, as He had already mentioned, and the chief among the actions are sacrifices, charities and penances, which result in purification of the mind. A purer mind reflects the Self and therefore attainment of the Supreme Bliss is possible through the performance of these actions. However, those who renounce usual and regular work (as is necessary according to their nature and role in the society, like a householder renouncing his basic duty of feeding the poor and needy and helping his family) out of delusion, is called *Tamasik* renunciation. If the renunciation is done for a higher purpose, like love of God or nation, it becomes a sacrifice and hence cannot be called inaction. But if it simply means giving up actions thinking that a life without actions is better than a life full of actions, it is plain laziness.

If, however, somebody renounces out of fear or bodily pain, that renunciation is also not great, because negative emotions like fear, hatred, and sorrow cannot be the driver of anything great. Therefore such a renunciation, like somebody giving up a work fearing that it will be too painful for him, is called *Rajasik* (driven by passion). One who does such a renunciation does not obtain any associated merits, because such renunciation does not beget any merit.

If however work is performed in a detached spirit, in a selfless manner, without any consideration for the fruits, it becomes the greatest of renunciation, like a patriot laying his life for the country or a great teacher renouncing his worldly life for the benefit of mankind. Such renunciation is called *Sattvik*.

A person, who possesses *Sattvik* form of renunciation, deserves merit and is bereft of doubts (regarding how work needs to be performed). He does not dislike actions which require little skill, nor does he get attached to work which requires great skill and expertise.

One who has relinquished and is of a *Sattvik* nature can perform any work, however disagreeable it may be to others. Every activity he does, he does it with dedication and perfection because he takes it up as a worship of the Lord. Neither is he attached to any form of work, however great that may be. He can renounce that work if the situation so demands at ease, even if it is high paying or if such renunciation demands a very high price.

In this world an embodied being cannot give up work entirely. Therefore one who has renounced the fruits of action is called *Tyagi* or one who has relinquished.

If one has to maintain body, one would still have to perform some actions like eating, sleeping, walking, closing eyes, respiration, digestion and all other normal bodily functions, even if he gives up all other forms of work. Therefore one cannot really give up work. Only a person who has realized the *Atman*, who knows that the *Atman* is different from the body, one who in the language of *Sri Ramakrishna* is like a ripe betel nut or coconut for which the shell and the kernel are separated, shell being the body and the kernel being the *Atman*, becomes a true *Sannyasin*. Such a person knows that he does not act; that his nature performs all actions. He is *Atman* or the witness. All others, however hard they try, cannot give up actions and therefore the fruits resulting from them. The best course therefore is to relinquish the fruits.

There are three types of fruits resulting from any action – merits, demerits and a mixture of the two. Those who do not renounce the fruits have an afterlife (and have to come back) while those who have renounced all fruits do not have to take birth again. They are liberated, either in the very life or thereafter.

## **DIFFERENT TYPES OF DOER OF ACTIONS**

*Sri Krishna* said, “There are five causes (of actions) which are narrated in *Sankhya* and *Vedanta*, the twin modes of accomplishment of all endeavors. The body, the agent, the various instruments, the different endeavors, and last but not the least the presiding deity - these together comprise of the five (causes).”



It is quite cryptic but with a little knowledge of *Sankhya* and *Vedanta* one is able to surmise what the Lord has proclaimed here. *Sankhya* speaks of innumerable *Purusha* or individual souls and *Prakrti*, the universe. *Sankhya* lays emphasis on individual soul's *karma* being the decider of its fate or progress in various lives, while the *karma* itself is driven by its *Prakrti*. There are various needs of the body for which action needs to be performed – like eating, sleeping, sexual drives, drives to evacuate etc. These are present in all living beings and more prominent among the lower animals. Such activities are performed through the senses including the mind, which are the instruments. The true agent is the nature which propels one to perform such actions. If one has a *Tamasik* nature one would not hesitate to commit a foul act like murder for self interest. If one has a *Sattvik* nature one would try to do good, out of compassion for others and would lead a moral life. A *Rajasik* person would indulge in actions out of passion, like sense pleasure, enjoyments, thrill, sports, ventures and even warfare. The different endeavors are the next cause. Every endeavor has its root in the desire. A desire for name, fame and fortune will propel one to chart out certain course of actions. The next causes are the presiding deities. Every sense organ has a presiding deity, which symbolically represents that particular action, for e.g., *Soma* for the mind, *Aditya* for the eyes, *Indra* for the hand, *Vishnu* for the feet etc. However the real sense of this presiding deity concept is that somebody drives these senses. These senses do not act on their own. Behind them is somebody or something that interprets the different sensory input, analyze them and act on the basis of the analysis. Since it is the intelligence that ultimately takes a decision to act, the divinity or deity (*daiva*) is the intelligence.

Whatever actions are initiated by body, speech or mind, be they good or evil, these five are the primal causes.

However that deluded, unwise individual, who does not realize (the truth), thinks or sees himself to be the doer.

An egoistic individual identifies himself with the body-mind and sees that he performs every action, little knowing that he is neither body, nor mind and therefore is not the true doer. One who is thus deluded will have to enjoy the fruits of all actions, be they good or bad. A person who has not

realized the *Atman*, the witness, the Supreme Being, sees himself as the performer and therefore becomes responsible for all the actions performed (which are performed by these five primal causes in reality).

One who does not have any sense of being the doer, i.e. who is devoid of ego consciousness, whose intelligence or intellect does not get involved with the action, such a person, even by destroying the entire world, does not kill, nor is entangled.

A non doer cannot be responsible for his actions. A child is not responsible for his acts. Similarly a realized soul is not responsible and does not get any merit or demerit. Therefore such a person is never entangled to the world. He is liberated from all actions and their consequences. It is a different story that such a person will never kill an insect, let alone the whole world as he will realize his unity with the entire universe. But the Lord is taking up this extreme example to emphasize His point on the renunciation of the action and fruits of action. *Siva*, the eternal principle of universal dissolution, for instance is a representation of this extreme example. Though He destroys the universe, He is not accountable, being the *Atman*.

The knowledge, the object of knowledge and the knower, these are the impetuses for action. The instruments, the action, the doer, these are the composition of actions.

Every being in this world have to perform some action to live, even to survive. The objective of all such actions is development of knowledge, over many ages and life, till the knowledge becomes perfect and till one is liberated. When there is knowledge, there has to be an object. Every living being searches for this object and after many trials and errors over many lives he arrives at the Supreme Truth, that which is the ultimate object of knowledge. This quest is driven by the nature and therefore the potential knower or his nature is one of the triggers for all such actions over myriads of lives. However all these actions result in consequences for him and therefore act as further trigger for other actions and this cycle continues *ad infinitum*, till one is able to realize the Supreme Knowledge.

The action is performed through instruments of action, by the doer to achieve certain end results. The senses are the major instruments, and nature is the actual doer. Work performed or the end result is the objective of the action.

#### **CATEGORIZATION OF KNOWLEDGE, ACTION, DOER ACCORDING TO GUNAS**

*Sri Krishna* said, "The knowledge, the action, the doer, these three are further classified according to their *gunas* in the science of *Gunas* (*Sankhya* philosophy). Hear them from Me."

The wisdom by which one perceives the one entity among all beings, an eternal sense of unity among the myriads of (apparent) different forms, is called *Sattvik* knowledge.

The knowledge that creates the idea of difference and separateness, the various forms, thereby giving rise to the notion of individual entities and ideas is called *Rajasik* knowledge.

By which one is attached to one idea or action as if it constitutes the whole, the one and only one purpose of existence, without meaning, devoid of significance, with poor understanding, is called *Tamasik* knowledge.

The great wisdom which perceives the grand unity which pervades the whole universe, irrespective of the apparent differences existing in nature is *Sattvik* knowledge, because it seeks the fundamental truth. A knowledge which understands the differences as differences without interpreting any hidden meaning, and therefore is concerned with a specific segment (like religion, nation, culture) among these different sets is called *Rajasik* knowledge. *Tamasik* knowledge is fundamentalism, bigotry etc. For instance *Tamasik* knowledge would consider one religion or caste or nation to be superior to everything else and therefore would try to dominate others using fire and sword. Therefore this knowledge understands very little, does not think about others (except for the interest group to which it belongs) and is wholeheartedly attached to the activity of propagating that one idea even at the cost and exclusion of the others. It is very dangerous and intolerant.

The work that is done in an unattached manner, in a spirit devoid of anger and attraction, as stipulated or regular duty (as per the injunctions of the scripture), without desiring the fruits is called *Sattvik* work.

The work that is performed out of desire of fruits and assuming the “doer” attitude, with much effort, is called *Rajasik* work.

The work which results in bondage, destruction, violence, without any consideration of the ability (to perform such a work), one which is started out of delusion is called *Tamasik* work.

Any action performed in detached spirit, as per mandates in the scripture, i.e. as per societal and religious norm (e.g. battle for a *Kshatriya*, ablutions and worship for a *Brahmin*, feeding others and charities for householders etc.), which is done without any passion, in a selfless manner, without expecting any reward, recognition, name, fame, fortune or merit is called *Sattvik*. Such a work is devoid of ego, pride or vanity. Any work which is done with passion, attachment, desiring merits and other fruits, for fulfilling selfish needs, with ego, i.e. acting and behaving like a doer, with much effort for the sake of the fruits, is called *Rajasik* work. Much of the actions performed in this world are *Rajasik*. A *Tamasik* work is binding, slavery out of delusion, in a vengeful, hateful, lustful spirit, may be for causing deliberate injury or dangerous, careless actions which may cause injuries and violence, out of cruelty, cowardice and sloth. This is the worst form of work, like plotting to cause harm to others, a terrorist attack, personal vendetta, reckless behavior causing great harm to the society out of ignorance or otherwise etc. A *Tamasik* work is deplorable and condemnable in most cases, causing distinct harm to others and resulting in severe demerit to the perpetrator. A *Tamasik* work is neither mindful of the ability of the one who is carrying out the work, nor the severity of the consequences (like loss of lives etc.) which may result to others.

The doer who is devoid of attachment, who does not have a trace of ego, who is full of patience and enthusiasm (for any noble, selfless venture), who is indifferent to success and failure in all endeavors, is called *Sattvik*.

A *Rajasik* is one who is attached (to the work and all which he deems as his “own”), who performs work for the sake of the fruits, greedy, passionate and impure, and who is swayed by the twin emotions of pleasure and pain.

One who is devoid of devotions, only concerned with the worldly affairs, impudent, deceiver, who hurls insults, is slothful, despondent, and procrastinating, is called *Tamasik*.

A *Sattvik* doer does not regard oneself as the doer. He treats himself as an instrument acting on divine will and therefore is always eager and enthusiast to perform any work with a selfless spirit, without desiring any fruits or merits for self. He is not bothered about personal gains and is not attached to the work. Therefore even if the work fails he is not in the least bothered and starts afresh. A *Rajasik* worker on the other hand always hankers after fruits and rewards, if not in this life, for the afterlife like heavens and associated pleasures. He is under the influence of the pairs of opposites like pleasures and pains, aversion and attachment. The actions performed by him are not selfless. He is egoist and assumes that he is the doer and therefore is affected by the praises and blames, i.e. the nature of the outcome – success or failure. A *Tamasik* on the other hand is worldly, selfish to the core, lazy (i.e. not willing to work hard for self improvement and gains), looks for easy gains, even by deceiving others and by dishonest and corrupt ways, is impudent, i.e. won't pay due respect to those deserving it, at times may be insulting to good people i.e. quarrelsome and ever inclined to blame others for their own faults, gets despondent easily on seeing adversities which are their own creation, i.e. has no self respect or courage, always willfully procrastinates in the name of deliberation.

#### **GUNAS AS THE DRIVERS OF NORMAL PROPENSITY - THE FUNDAMENTAL STIMULUS FOR NATURE**

The three *gunas* can be used to classify and categorize persons in context of their intellect and patience or fortitude.

The intellect which easily discriminates between the paths of action and renunciation, action and non action or right and wrong action, courage and

its absence, bondage and liberation (the actions in both contexts) is called *Sattvik*.

A *Sattvik* intellect will be able to accurately discriminate between right and wrong in every sphere and will choose the right. This intellect is selfless and is therefore pure.

The intellect which wrongfully discerns the virtue from vice (i.e. often unable to make a rigid discrimination, esp. when these are in a subtle form), and is unable to discriminate properly between right and wrong action, is called *Rajasik* intellect.

A *Rajasik* intellect will not always be able to tell which a proper action is and which is not, or which the path of virtue is and which deviates from it, as that intellect is impure and self seeking. It will look for selfish gains by following even an improper course of action. It will rationalize its act.

An intellect which considers vice to be the virtue, one which is clouded with darkness, one which is always devious, is called *Tamasik* intellect. A *Tamasik* intellect is the recipe for a perfect disaster as it leads to wholesale destruction of the individual. A murderer may possess this kind of intellect. This intellect even fails to recognize what is good for its own self and therefore it prompts the individual to indulge in actions which brings its own downfall.

The fortitude by the aid of which one holds the entire activities of the mind, vital life forces and the senses, by the help of Yoga, without deviating from the same (i.e. with utmost devotion and steadfastness) is called *Sattviki* fortitude.

Such a fortitude enables one to get into the highest mode of life and continue with it, viz. that of renunciation and penance.

The fortitude by which one can obtain name, fame, fortune, can fulfill the desires and lead a prosperous life for the sake of the fruits of the endeavors is called *Rajasik* fortitude.



The fortitude by which the deluded one never gives up dreaming (daydreaming), irrational fear, grief, despondence, conceit etc. is called *Tamasik* fortitude. Such fortitude enables one to stick to the different bad tendencies, which do not help in personal growth or evolution.

Then Lord *Krishna* began to explain the threefold paths of happiness. The happiness which one begets from nature and treading the path of which results in the end of suffering, the one which is painful, almost poison like in the beginning but confers immortality as a result is called *Sattvik* happiness.

*Sattvik* happiness is a pure form of happiness that is painful to begin with and may require both *Sattvik* intellect to discriminate it (from the other transient forms of joys which may tempt one away from its path) and also *Sattvika* fortitude to hold on to it with determination. It is obtained through *Sattvik* knowledge, from *Sattvik* forms of actions done by a *Sattvik* doer. The end result is eternal bliss. One example is the happiness that one obtains through *Samadhi*, the communion with God. The path is as dangerous as razor's edge and therefore involves much suffering in the beginning but as one walks down the path one progressively begins to enjoy the true happiness, compared to which the fleeting material happiness is nothing. Such happiness stems from one's own nature, i.e. by following natural tendencies one is able to obtain such a state of bliss.

*Rajasik* happiness originates in contact between the senses and the objects of senses, i.e. it depends on sense pleasures. It is therefore transient and even though enjoyable in the beginning, results in much suffering in the end. This is because after enjoying the material pleasures one is bound to end up in grief as one cannot enjoy such pleasures owing to eternity, if not for anything else owing to sickness, old age and death.

*Tamasik* happiness is one that originates in delusion of the self, and is triggered by sleep, indolence and miscomprehension. It is the worst of all the happiness as it neither gives any peace nor bliss, nor it results in any gain. It is merely a state for a very temporary period (like taking intoxicating drugs which may trigger temporary bliss but may result in



permanent brain damage and insanity). Once that state goes, one is liable to degenerate into a much weakened state.

There is none in the three worlds – in the earth, in the heaven, among the gods, any created entity which is free from the bondage imposed by one of these three *Gunas* or qualities of nature.

The caste divisions of *Brahmins*, the *Kshatriyas*, the *Vaisya* and the *Sudras* are also on account of the differences of the nature (triggered by the qualities of nature).

The control of external senses, control of internal passions, austerities, purity, compassion, honesty and straightforwardness, knowledge and wisdom, theism are the natural tendencies of a *Brahmin*.

Courage, power, fortitude, resourcefulness, bravery on the battlefield, charity, acting as the Lord (displaying power), these are the natural tendencies of a *Kshatriya*.

Agricultural activities, animal husbandry and trade are the natural habits of a *Vaisya*, while being at the service of the other three castes is the natural aptitude of a *Sudra*.

#### **ACHIEVING PERFECTION BY WORKING ACCORDING TO ONE'S OWN NATURE**

Such persons engaged in pursuing these activities which come naturally to them can achieve perfection. The Lord said, “I shall tell you now as to how one who is engaged in one’s own work can gain perfection.”

This is a wonderful teaching of *Gita*, that even people engaged in their own fields of work can achieve perfection. They neither have to renounce their home, work and family and go and take refuge in a forest in order to realize God, nor do they have to be master of their passions and be a *Yogi*. They simply need to carry out their own work which comes most naturally to them according to their predisposition (by birth or by the *Sanskaras* accumulated in the past lives), in a way that is to be divulged. There is no caste distinction in achieving perfection. Any one belonging to any caste

can achieve perfection as long as he/she is performing it in a certain manner or spirit.

*Sri Krishna* now reveals that special knowledge. "From whom all creatures and their tendencies have come into being and who is pervaded everywhere, by worshipping that Supreme Being through one's own work one is able to achieve perfection."

Work thus has to be heightened to a form of worship. One's own tendencies, good or bad, can be utilized for the worship of the Supreme Being who is in all work, who is all work and who also represents the inclination for all work.

Any scholarly mind may ask, can then a murderer or a terrorist achieve perfection by claiming that the murder is dedicated to the Supreme Being, as *Thagis* or some bandits used to do in India in the past? The answer is a resounding No. Such a disposition is absolutely contrary to what *Gita* teaches. One can only worship the Supreme Being if one worships every being, because God is there in every being and every being is in God. Terrorists and murderers cannot dedicate their actions unto God because they are always afraid of getting caught or killed themselves. A true dedication is a complete surrender; one will not worry over the consequences, something which is never possible in an evil work. On the other hand a warrior can still fight a battle dispassionately if he does not care whether he will be killed or his enemy, set aside all his concerns and dedicate the fruits to the God, which *Sri Krishna* is asking *Arjuna* to do. If a terrorist really and truly does that, he will not remain a terrorist for long. By dedicating fruits one becomes purer and purer until one realizes the Supreme Truth of fundamental unity. Moreover work here is according to one's prescribed duty, as per *Varnashrama* rules and injunctions of the scriptures. None of the scriptures advocate murder.

One's own natural habit sans any merit is better than going against one's own nature forcefully. Even if one is sincere in the adopted duties which are against his very nature, one is bound to end up poorer because nature will extract its own pound of flesh. Unless one has conquered nature one will have to give way to her. If one performs actions according to one's

own nature, with utmost sincerity and devotion, by surrendering the fruits, one does not beget any sin.

This was discussed in Chapter 3 and has been reiterated by the Lord here. Going against one's natural tendencies – culture, habit, tastes and preferences, beliefs, values, has disastrous consequences. That is why incarnations or the great sages never go against established norms but try to build on them, giving them a constructive direction. In this world where imitation of the cultures and habits of other nations, esp. the one who are more powerful and who forcefully thrust upon them on their hapless victims, this teaching becomes extremely relevant. It is obviously relevant in the context of *Arjuna* who, despite being a *Kshatriya* was going against his natural inclination by declaring his intention of renouncing action in the battlefield. This natural disposition is also the basis of the caste divisions.

The work which comes naturally should not be relinquished even if there are some faults associated with it, because some faults are embedded in almost all endeavors, just as fire is hidden in smoke.

Every work results in some good and bad. Even during respiration we kill microbes which we cannot see with the naked eye. Since the natural resources in the world are limited, if we share something in the form of charity with somebody, we incur the sin of depriving others of the same. None of the actions are free of blame. This is very evident if we study carefully *Mahabharata* where even *Krishna's* actions are questioned.

#### **THE KNOWER OF BRAHMAN - ONE WHO HAS ACHIEVED PERFECTION**

*Sri Krishna* then describes the one who is eligible for renouncing all forms of actions. One who is unattached to everything, who has won over the self, i.e. has realized the Self, one who is above all passions and desires, obtains perfection in inaction through renunciation (of actions).

*Sri Krishna* further says, “Hear from Me now in brief, Oh *Arjuna*, how such a perfect person, realizes the supreme being or the *Brahman*, which is the *summum bonum* of all knowledge. “

By means of pure intelligence and by controlling self with the aid of fortitude (i.e. by practicing the *Sama, Dama* etc.), by renouncing all objects of senses like sound etc. and by giving up on the passions like attachment and aversion one is able to progress along that path. He is also the one who has retired to a secluded spot, is moderate in food intake, controlled in speech, body and mind (i.e. never gives in to temptations and passions, not even in mind), firmly entrenched in the yoga of meditation (Chapter 6) and is possessed of dispassion. He has relinquished Ego, vanities (of power), pride, lust, anger, possessions, has become devoid of all possessiveness (“I” and “Mine”) and is tranquil. Such a person is established in the knowledge of the *Brahman*.

Such a tranquil soul, who has verily become like *Brahman* himself (as the saying goes, a knower of *Brahman* is *Brahman* itself), i.e. is above body consciousness and above the qualities of nature, neither has any sorrow, nor any desire. He is equal-minded to all beings, i.e. see the Self in every being and every being established in the Self of Brahman. He thus obtains the greatest devotion to the Lord.

This is a pivotal statement. A person who is established in *Atman* or the knowledge of *Brahman* obtaining the greatest devotion implies that devotion and knowledge, though fundamentally different paths, lead to the same outcome and one who is established in knowledge is also established in supreme devotion or *para bhakti* and vice versa. This is also the assertion of *Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa*. So far we have seen that *Jnana Yoga* and *Karma Yoga* lead to the same result (Chapter 4 & 5). And now we know that *Jnana Yoga* and *Bhakti Yoga* lead to the same outcome, thus unifying all these different paths into a harmonious one. A true *Jnani* is also a *Bhakta*. A true selfless worker will come to possess both knowledge and devotion in the end.

“Through intense devotion, he is able to know Me (the Lord), just as I am, in the truest form. Thus knowing Me truly, He becomes assimilated in Me.”

Only a devotee of highest form can know the Lord truly. He reveals Himself to His devotee only, because with the devotee He shares a unique relationship. *Brahman* is devoid of attribute or form, while the *Iswara*, the

Lord God is with attribute, but can be formless or with form depending on the devotee's inclination. A devotee would like to enjoy the company of His personal God and therefore would like to see His form. Devotion is based on love and one cannot love the formless unless one can conjure an image or a symbol. Those symbols, in case of religions which do not believe in the forms or idols, are incarnations or great prophets, churches or mosques or synagogues, crosses, crescent moons and stars and so on. Only the devotee is able to understand the God in its entirety because a mere *jnani* will not understand how a formless god can assume forms. Since only a devotee is able to see the form he can get assimilated into his chosen form or *Ishta* through intense devotion.

“Even while performing all actions, by taking refuge in Me, he obtains the eternal and immutable place (in Me) through My grace.”

By obtaining the Lord, the devotee attains the supreme status. However a pure devotee never wants to become united with the Lord as he wants to keep a difference, merely for the sake of enjoying that relationship between him and the Lord. In the language of *Sri Ramakrishna*, a devotee does not want to become sugar; he wants to enjoy sugar (i.e. the sweetness of the nectar of love). In reality the devotee and the Lord are the same entity, the Lord only becomes His devotee to show the world the sweetness of the path of devotion. This is the eternal principle underlying the relationship between *Krishna* and *Radha* and other *Gopis*, who are the greatest devotees of *Krishna*.

## LAST MESSAGES

“By means of the mental faculty, renounce all actions unto Me and make Me your greatest goal. Taking refuge with *Buddhi Yoga*, be steadfast in thinking about Me. By being in constant communion with Me, you will be able to get rid of all evils in your life by My grace. However, if you do not listen to Me out of egoism, you will perish.”

By cultivating thoughts which are devoted only to the Lord, one is able to transcend all miseries and troubles. One then attains a state of mind which is pure and tranquil. When all actions are renounced to the Lord, the person concerned has no aspiration, worry, anxiety, attachment, aversion,

lust or desire left. His entire nature is then filled with the thoughts of the Supreme Being. However, if by being egoistic, one disregards the advice provided by a purified intelligence and mind, one is bound to suffer. *Sri Krishna* has asked *Arjuna* to fight relinquishing all fruits. If *Arjuna*, out of the pity that he had possessed in the beginning, thinks otherwise, he will be in deep sorrow as the war will claim all his relatives and friends. Instead, if he battles, he will be able to save lives and also be able to recover from the blows which destiny will deal to him. Being established in God, he will get the knowledge and wisdom to tide over all crises and losses. We have seen the same happening during and after *Kurukshetra* war, when *Arjuna's* son *Abhimanyu* died, the five sons of *Draupadi* were killed, allies like *Virata* and *Drupada* fell, and the entire *Panchala* clan was destroyed by *Drona* and his son *Aswatthama*. *Arjuna* and *Pandavas* temporarily lost mental peace but could recover the same with *Sri Krishna's* grace.

“If out of egoism you claim that you will not fight, you take a false vow, as your nature will direct you (to fight). Everybody, *Kaunteya*, is engaged in their own work propelled by their own nature. Whatever you refuse to do out of delusion, you will be forced to do (by your nature).”

This is a masterpiece of psychology. A carpenter is drawn towards wood work because his nature forces him to work on wood. An artist will paint and a musician will sing because of the same reason. We all are born with certain inherent tendencies which are part of our nature. Such tendencies manifest themselves as we grow up and these tendencies decide as to what we are fit to do in our lives. If we do something different from the inherent tendencies, we normally suffer. It takes a great force to go against one's nature and often it is counterproductive.

Does that mean that a thief or murderer can be acquitted and can never be reformed since it is in their nature to steal and commit violence? A thief steals because his nature compels him to do so but it is in his power to subdue that nature and imbibe a higher nature. A nature which compels one to perform baser actions is a poorer nature of the *Tamasik* type and we know that *Tamas* can be overcome by *Rajas* and *Rajas* by *Sattva* – a gradual progress from lower to higher forms of nature. So unless there is a struggle within ourselves we are victims in the hand of our nature. Does this mean



that the Lord advises the thief to carry out its own activity, i.e. stealing? Again, that's not the case. The Lord wants us to follow our higher nature and call of the duty and not the lower nature and the call of the wild. *Arjuna's* duty is to fight and therefore by being negligent he is actually falling prey to his lower nature, of the *Tamasik* type. Often *Tamas* comes in the garb of *Sattva*. Here also *Arjuna* (and the scholars and intellectuals) think that he is being compassionate by not waging the war, when in reality he is afraid, of losses, of suffering, of pain, of sin and ingratitude. The whole endeavor of *Gita* is to enable us to overcome our lower nature and reach the higher and higher ones. This is further evident from the last few lines. In the next verse *Sri Krishna* explains the reason behind all our troubles and miseries.

“Oh *Arjuna*, *Iswara*, the Lord God, is situated in the heart of all beings. (Without knowing it) all beings are caught up in the whirlwind of *Maya*, the divine illusive force, in a mechanical way. Therefore go and perform all your duties and actions in all circumstances by remembering that (*Iswara*). By the grace of that you will get the eternal state of supreme bliss.”

This is the core of *Gita's* teaching. Every living being is inherently divine, only we know it not. We are deluded by the nature, the *Maya*, who is the great *Para Prakrti*. *Maya* is a great mystery. It is *Maya* that deludes us from knowing our nature. It is a great force that pervades this universe. It exists and also it does not exist. It is an instrument in the hand of God to perpetuate the creation. It is composed of the three *gunas* – *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas* which make up the entire universe. One, who transcends the *gunas*, transcends *Maya* and therefore realizes God or Self. The *Maya* is composed of *Avidya* or ignorance and *Vidya* or knowledge. *Vidya* directs us towards God and enables us to ascend along the spiritual path, while *Avidya* forcefully thrusts us into the frying pan of the world and worldliness, the quicksand of the base nature, with the help of its weapons like lust, greed, desire, anger, attachment, delusion, pride, ego, vanity, sloth, hatred, suffering, sickness, selfishness, cowardice, i.e. in sort all *Rajasik* and *Tamasik* qualities. It is *Avidya Maya* that is variously known as Satan or Devil or *Mar* in different religions. It is the source of all temptations for a spiritual aspirant. As long as one is under the spell of *Avidya*, one never realizes God, or even possesses the urge to do so. It is only when an aspirant comes



under *Vidya Maya* that the first glimpses of truth dawn on him or her and therefore he or she pines for the Absolute Truth, living behind all prejudices, dogmas, and doctrines of established religions. *Avidya Maya* is the sustainer of the material world, while *Vidya*, like St. Peter has the key to the golden gate of the kingdom of heaven, the Absolute Bliss, the Supreme Knowledge, the Supreme Consciousness or Being (*Sat-Chit-Ananda* or *Brahman*). *Maya is the veil that covers the God realization from us. Remove the veil and you will see the Supreme Truth yourself, just as scum cover the clear water in a tank or a cloud covers the sun light – so says Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa.*

How is Maya overcome, or how can the veil be removed? Chapter 7 first provided the answer – One who worships Me can swim across the great ocean of *Maya*. **Now the Lord reveals that *Maya* is overcome through the grace of the God, if one takes complete refuge in God in all activities.**

“Now you have been told the great secrets and mysteries (of spiritual life) by Me. By listening to this raptly, **do whatever you desire.**”

The intellectuals who claim that *Sri Krishna* coaxes *Arjuna* to fight the war should do well to read this statement of His. After explaining everything to *Arjuna* and revealing to him all secrets the Lord neither coaxes, nor cajoles, nor does He request him to fight. He merely says, "do whatever you please." Desire of fighting was always there inside *Arjuna*, only he was hesitating under the spell of weakness. When the teaching enabled him to regain his strength, his desire to fight was intensified, and after that he did not look back.

*Sri Krishna* thus reveals Himself to all spiritual aspirants through this discourse to *Arjuna*. The entire world is facing a terrible battle, which is fought in the innermost core of the human heart – the fight between good and evil, between gods and demons, the *daiva* or the divine tendencies and the *asura* or the demoniac qualities. It is up to us to listen to Him and act and thus excel in our spiritual life or ignore Him at our own peril.

But this is not the end; something is still there in the Lord's mind. He knows the tendencies of all the worldly beings, those who appeared in the

past, those who are present and those who would come in the future. He knows that not everybody is fit for the path of contemplation or action or even the highest devotion as prescribed in *Gita*. But they would still pine for the Truth. They need to have some hope. There should also be some hope for Arjuna, after he had fought and won over his enemies. He may think his mission accomplished but still may not get the much cherished peace, thinking all the while about the mayhem. Therefore He says, "Now listen to the greatest of all secrets, you are my great favorite and therefore I tell unto you something of immense benefit. Relinquish all duties and take *complete refuge* in Me. I shall free you from all sins, do not grieve. Devote your mind to Me, be My devotee, My worshiper, bow down to Me (i.e. surrender to Me). I truthfully promise you, who is so dear to Me that you'll get Me."

Complete surrender is not for everybody. That would need the greatest strength imaginable for a devotee. *Sri Ramakrishna* bestowed the same to *Girish Chandra Ghosh*, the bravest of his devotees, when he asked the latter to give "power of attorney" to him. A "power of attorney" to God implies total and unconditional surrender of everything – of will, name, fame, thoughts, actions, desires, families, friends, in short, everything connected with the twin attributes of possessiveness and ego – "I" and "Mine". Once this happens, one is automatically free from all sins, because all his actions are destroyed as a result. At the same time, this is so difficult. *Girish* realized this when he could not even cry when his sons and daughters and dear wife died as they were not his to cry. Total surrender demands surrender over the all rights and responsibilities. *Arjuna* also realized this when sons of five *Pandavas* were all killed in the great battle. The Lord will take up responsibility of only those who become children of the Lord. One cannot take up responsibility of an adult but one willingly takes up the responsibility of children. Therefore through such complete surrender one becomes as pure and simple as a little child. Jesus meant the same when he said that kingdom of heaven is reached only through children. Such children are the pure hearted children of the universal mother who will not even look back when her child is busy playing with his toys of material happiness, but will come running when the child, leaving behind all such toys, piteously cries for her company.

A devotee who has surrendered unconditionally will get the Lord, is His solemn promise to the mankind. This is a message of great hope.

Every message of *Gita* is universal because it transcends all artificial barriers of religion, caste, race, cultures and geographies. The same truth as proclaimed in *Gita* is seen in other scriptures. The languages may be different, the context may be different, the dogmas may vary, but the message is applicable to all. Unless that happens a scripture isn't truly God's message to the mankind, because God does not speak to one particular sect, culture or creed. He is universal and therefore His message must be universal.

The Lord now tells us as to who are fit to receive this universal message. He says that one should not reveal this great secret to people who do not perform austerities, who are not devotees, who do not render service (in the form of worship). Nor should this be ever told to one who despises the Lord (the materialists). One who narrates this supreme secret to the devotees of God, with great devotion and faith, will certainly realize the Supreme Being. There is no one dearer to the God than the devotees and those who enjoy great pleasure in narrating the Supreme teachings in the most devotional spirit. *Tulsidas*, the author of *Ramcharitmanas* in Hindi, the exploits of Lord *Rama*, was a great example of such a devotee. *Narada*, the divine sage, is the goal of all devotees as he travels across the three worlds, reciting the Lord's name to all his devotees, and is thus eternally favorite with the Lord. One who studies this entire conversation between *Arjuna* and *Krishna*, would have worshipped the Lord through the path of *jnana* or wisdom, i.e. will gain wisdom in the process. Anybody who listens to this discourse with devotional fervor, they will also obtain great spiritual states, by the merit of mere listening.

*Sri Krishna* now asks *Arjuna*, as if to obtain a feedback, "By listening to this, oh *Arjuna*, with rapt attention, have your delusion and ignorance been destroyed?"

*Arjuna* responds, “Delusion is gone, I have regained my composure, entirely on account of Your grace, oh *Achyuta*. I am now steady, my doubts are gone, I will now do as You tell me to do (i.e. I shall fight).”

Finally *Arjuna*’s delusion is gone. He now knows that he is an instrument. He also has the supreme assurance from the God incarnate, that if he performs the work by renouncing everything to the lotus feet of the Lord, he will incur no sin. Moreover all his doubts and fears are unfounded as God himself is the architect of the Great War. He is the eternal Time, coming down for the purpose of destruction of the world.

Thus ends *Gita*. However, a little portion in the end speaks of the viewpoints of *Sanjaya*, who is narrating the story to *Dhritarastra* as it is. *Sanjaya* says, “Thus, I have, Oh King, heard and narrated to you the great conversation between *Vasudeva* (*Krishna*) and *Arjuna*. By the grace of *Vyasa* (the composer of *Mahabharata* who gave the vision to *Sanjaya* to see or remember the war as it is for reporting to *Dhritarastra*) I have been able to listen to this supreme discourse on Yoga, from the mouth of the Lord of *Yogas* Himself, *Sri Krishna*. By constantly remembering the discourse I am delighted again and again. Also by remembering the greatest and grandest cosmic form of the Lord God, I am joyous again and again. To my mind, where there is the Lord of *Yoga Krishna*, and *Partha* (*Arjuna*) the great archer, united, there will be prosperity, victory, power, and eternal law, such is my conviction.”

-----Dedicated to Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna-----

### **Courtesy and Reference**

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